

Ohio University

OHIO Open Library

Berita

Summer 2018

Berita Summer 2018

Dominik M. Müller

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/berita>



Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Müller, Dominik M., "Berita Summer 2018" (2018). *Berita*. 41.

<https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/berita/41>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by OHIO Open Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Berita by an authorized administrator of OHIO Open Library. For more information, please contact deborded@ohio.edu.

Summer
2018

Berita

Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group Association for Asian Studies

| | |
|---|-------|
| Letter from the Chair..... | 2 |
| Announcements..... | 3 |
| John A. Lent Prize 2018 Commendation | 4 |
| Ronald Provencher Travel Grant Commendation..... | 4–5 |
| Panel Report: Food, Belonging, and Identity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Malaysia/Singapore | 7–8 |
| Article: Social Categorization and Religiously Framed State-Making in Brunei..... | 9 |
| Article: A New Dawn for Malaysia: The Election that Tipped the Balance..... | 22 |
| Project Report: Project M: Campaigning with a “Dictator” | 29 |
| Book Review: Planting Empire, Cultivating Subjects: British Malaya, 1786-1941 | 31 |
| Call for Panelists and Book Chapters: Revisioning 2020 | 32–33 |
| Call for Book Chapters: Malaysian Politics and People, Vol. 3 | 33–34 |
| Job Opportunities..... | 34 |
| Call for Papers: Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs | 34 |
| Member Notes..... | 35 |
| Editorial Information..... | 35 |



Letter from the Chair

This is my first letter as the new Chair of the MSB Studies Group as I take over the leadership from Eric Thompson, who served a three-year term characterized by hard work and a devotion to increase the visibility and maintain the credibility of our organization. He remains as Chair ex-officio and will continue keep MSB on strong footing as we seek to build and grow our group to include members from around the world who work on and think about this key region of insular Southeast Asia.

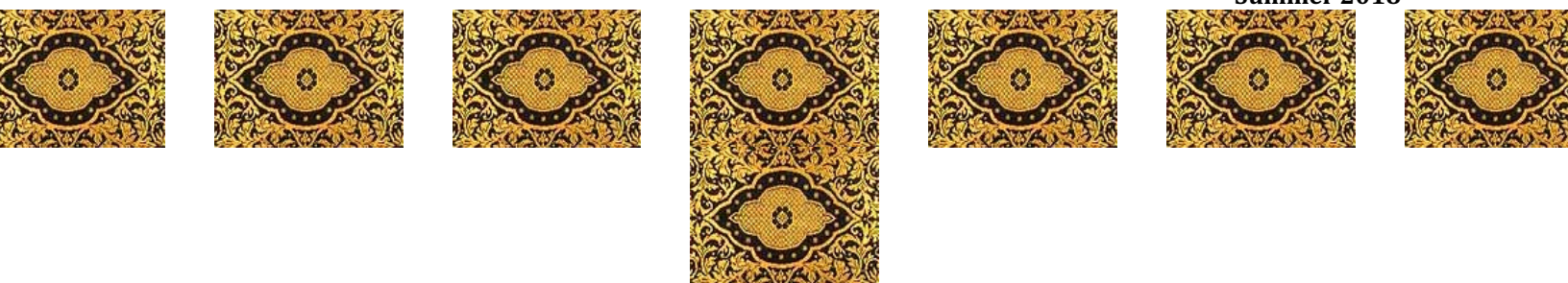
At our annual meeting, which always takes place at the Association of Asian Studies conference, we thanked Eric for his wonderful service, and voted to elect Cheong Gan Soon as the Deputy Chair and Chair-Elect. We were delighted that Dominik Müller agreed to take over the editorship of BERITA, and this issue reflects his effort to producing the Summer 2018 issue right on schedule. Dominik, Cheong Soon, and I are committed to making BERITA a publication that truly matters to our members and serves their interests. Along with our Google Group, “msbforum,” (which you can join by emailing me at msbchair@gmail.com); our very active and informative Facebook group (which you can request to join at “Official Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Studies Group [MSB]”); and our annual meeting, we communicate with and across a very wide and growing group of people who share our interests. But BERITA, (formerly and for decades appearing in print form) has always been the mainstay and foundation of our efforts.

If you look at the BERITA summer 1998 issue, published exactly twenty years ago (you can find twenty years of BERITA linked to our Facebook page and the earlier issues online at the Ohio

State Library), you’ll learn what mattered to readers then. It has an interview with anthropologist Ronald Provencher, who served as Chair of MSB for many years and an editor of BERITA. A list of new books published appears: among them several worth another look in the current moment—Francis Loh Kok and Khoo Boo Teik’s *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices*, Edmund Terence Gomez’s *Chinese Business in Malaysia*, and Peter Searles’ *The Riddle of Malaysian Capitalism: Rent-Seekers or Real Capitalists?* Articles discuss Vincent Tan’s lawsuit against Jomo K.S. (claiming defamation from Jomo’s op-ed in the *Asian Wall Street Journal*—“Malaysia Props Up Crony Capitalists”)—and the dismissal of Chandra Muzaffar from Universiti Malaya. Those were turbulent and interesting times in Malaysia; they remain so, and we want BERITA to be a place where you learn much about them. We urge all of our members and readers to consider submitting material to the next issue of BERITA and any that follow. Please send us articles on your research, publications, and calls for papers and conferences, and use BERITA as a place to highlight your work and writing. We would especially like to spotlight the work of young scholars, report on recently published works, provide short reports about MSB-related events, and publish interviews with people in our field. I hope you enjoy this current issue.

*Patricia Sloane-White, MSB Group Chair
Department of Women and Gender Studies
University of Delaware, USA
pswhite@udel.edu*

Summer 2018



Announcements

Application for MSB Panel Sponsorship:

The Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei Studies Group sponsors one panel per year at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies. Members interested in panel sponsorship by the MSB are asked to submit the full panel and paper abstracts to the MSB Chair (pswhite@udel.edu) at least one week before the AAS Submission deadline, which is August 1, 2018 for the March 21-24, 2019 conference in Denver, Colorado. Sponsorship indicates a level of pre-vetting and assurance of the session's quality and importance by the sponsoring group or institution, which is taken into consideration by the AAS Program Committee during the review process. eration by the AAS Program Committee during the review process. Please note, sponsored sessions are not guaranteed acceptance and must undergo normal competitive review. The listing of a sponsor for the submitted proposal is taken into consideration by the Program Committee during the review process, but is not a guarantee of acceptance. If you would like your panel to be sponsored by the MSB Study Group, please mark the box on the proposal form indicating sponsorship—i.e., as if your MSB sponsorship were already confirmed. We will review all submissions and determine if sponsorship is to be granted.

Prizes

John A. Lent Prize 2018

Prof. John A. Lent founded BERITA in 1975, editing it for twenty-six years, and founded the

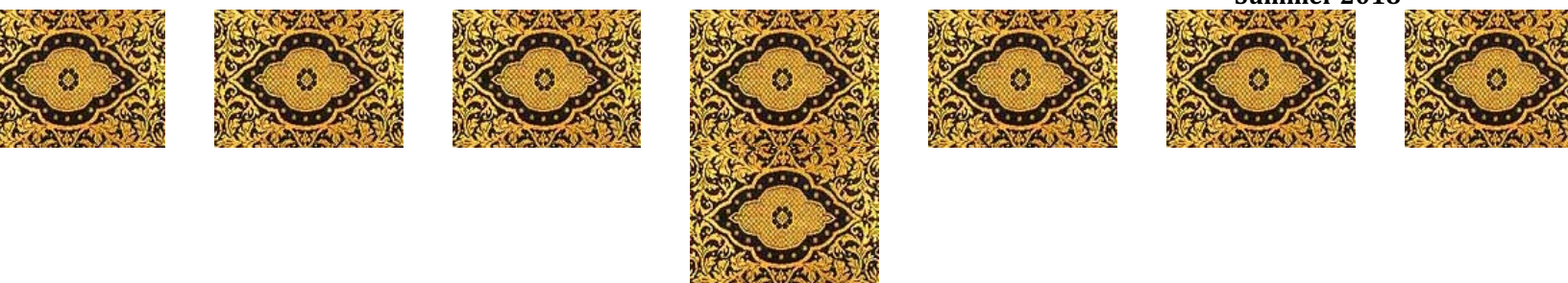
Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group in 1976, serving as chair for eight years. He has been a university faculty member since 1960, in Malaysia, the Philippines, China, and various U.S. universities. From 1972-74, Prof. Lent was founding director of Malaysia's first university-level mass communications program at Universiti Sains Malaysia. He has been a professor at Temple University since 1974.

Over the years, Prof. Lent has written monographs and many articles on Malaysian mass media, animation, and cartooning. He is the author and editor of seventy-one books and monographs, and hundreds of articles and book chapters. Since 1994, he has chaired the Asian Cinema Society and has been the editor of the journal Asian Cinema. He publishes and edits the International Journal of Comic Art, which he started in 1999, and is chair of the Asian Research Center on Animation and Comic Art and Asian-Pacific Association of Comic Art, both of which he established.

John A. Lent Prize Commendation

The 2018 John A. Lent prize is awarded to the best paper with Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei content presented at the previous year's (2017) Association for Asian Studies conference. After careful consideration of the papers submitted for the prize, the Committee for the John A. Lent Prize for the best paper on Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei presented to the AAS in the previous year has chosen as its winner Dominik M. Müller, for his paper "The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia: Ethnographic Observations from Brunei Darussalam and their Implications for Conceptualizing a Larger Comparative Framework." The three committee members all agreed that Müller's paper deserves special recognition for its compelling and original focus and the high quality of its analysis.

Summer 2018



All of the submitted papers this year were meticulously crafted, with strong theoretical bases. But Müller, in particular, has brought many theoretical lenses to play, which lends the reader multiple entry points into his analysis. He argues, convincingly, that the bureaucratization of Islam “is not simply synonymous” with its “institutionalization, but ...constitutes a wider socio-legal phenomenon that far transcends its institutional boundaries” as it “deeply penetrate(s) into public discourse and everyday life.” Choosing Brunei—a woefully understudied region in our organization and beyond—and offering a detailed understanding of the mechanics and structure of its Islamic state is in itself of great value, but Müller makes it clear that Brunei is a key site and “ideal type” for studying and conceptualizing the bureaucratization of religion. It is, however, his ambitious proposal for a broad intraregional, transnational, and collaborative research project on the bureaucratization of religion that is the highlight of his paper, and he has more than adequately made the case not just for filling a gap in the literature, but the worth of the analysis. What is equally tantalizing is his aim to create an epistemic partnership with his subjects—a crucial and overdue turn in the anthropology of power and bureaucracy. Müller’s own data on Brunei is intriguing, though by no means yet complete, and he recognizes that so much more work needs to be done for the ambitious theoretical framework to be sustainable. Finally, Müller’s paper shows strong awareness for the impact circulations of power bring to bear on ethnographic studies and builds an excellent case for conceptualizing bureaucratization of Islamic religious authority not only in the Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore region but anywhere governments and institutions produce and

exercise “the micro-politics of bureaucratic meaning-making and knowledge production.”

The Committee for the John A. Lent Prize congratulates Dominik Müller for this outstanding and compelling contribution to our knowledge.

Prize Committee Members: Eric C. Thompson, Cheong Soon Gan, and Jamie Davidson.

Ronald Provencher Travel Grant

The Ronald Provencher Travel Grant is named in honor of Ronald Provencher, distinguished cultural anthropologist of Malaysia, a long-time leader of the Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group and former editor of BERITA. It carries with it a US\$750 award for a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or independent scholar from Malaysia, Singapore or Brunei to travel to present a paper at the Association for Asian Studies meeting.

The 2018 Ronald Provencher Travel Grant was awarded to Helena Binti Muhamad Varkkey, Senior Lecturer, Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya. Throughout her academic career, she has been working on themes related to sustainable development. Her interest in the field has evolved to a focus on transboundary pollution in Southeast Asia, particularly pertaining to the role of patronage in agribusiness, especially the palm oil industry and its links to forest fires and haze in the region. At the 2018 AAS Conference, Helena Varkkey presented a paper entitled “Transboundary Haze as a Human Health Issue in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and Member State Responses,” at a panel sponsored by the AAS

Summer 2018



Southeast Asia Council (SEAC) and *TRaNS Journal*, entitled “Airs, Waters, Places and the Peoples Who Use and Abuse All of Them in Southeast Asia.”

Abstract:

“Haze has been a serious transboundary problem in Southeast Asia for decades. Originating largely from fires in Indonesia, the smoke travels across borders affecting up to six Southeast Asian states almost annually. Haze contains fine particles which irritate the eyes and penetrate the lungs. As a result, scores of Indonesians, Malaysians, and Singaporeans suffer from respiratory, dermatological, and ophthalmological problems. These health risks, together with reduced visibility, have also caused tourist numbers to drop dramatically. This chapter observes that governments worked hard to protect and maintain their tourism sectors in the face of the haze. The main tactic used was to underrepresent the health risks of haze, both to citizens and tourists. As a result, regional governments largely failed to recognize the haze as a serious public health issue. At the national level, states often under-report health effects in the attempt to keep tourism levels stable. At the regional level, member states have yet to agree on a common ASEAN-wide regional air quality measurement system, with many continuing to use a system that tends to underrepresent health risks. At the international level, affected states have been quick to debunk research that indicates higher levels of mortality. As a result, citizens lacked the awareness and urgency to make wise health and well-being decisions during haze episodes. Sustainable development involves economic growth balanced with social development and environmental sustainability. However, the case of the haze shows that Southeast Asian states still find it challenging to

balance these elements in the spirit of sustainable development.”

The full article will be published in an edited volume, *Sustainable Development; Asia-Pacific Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, ed. Pak Sum Low, forthcoming 2018/9).

Summer 2018



Panel Report

MSB Sponsored Panel

Food, Belonging and Identity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Malaysia/Singapore – A Panel Report

Patricia Sloane-White

This panel received the official sponsorship of the Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Studies Group, at the Association of Asian Studies, Annual Conference, Saturday, March 25, Washington, DC.

Chair and discussant: Patricia Sloane-White, University of Delaware.

Presenters:

Cheong Soon Gan, University of Wisconsin-Superior

Chee-Kien Lai, Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore

Mareike Pampus, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

The panel examined the constant creation and re-creation of Malayan, Malaysian, and Singaporean identities against the backdrop of ever-fluid regional and global encounters through the lens of food culture. The methodologically-varied papers had roots in history, architecture, and anthropology, spanned the late-19th century to the present, and explored how various communities negotiated personal and group identities as well as questions of belonging as they transitioned from visitors, migrants and sojourners to residents and citizens. They addressed how, from Furnivall's

plural society to national communities, food became the nexus in which identity was created, defined, expressed, re-created, re-defined, gazed upon and discursively controlled in Malaya, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Cheong Soon Gan's (University of Wisconsin-Superior) "Food, Cultural Identity, and the Western Gaze in late 19th-century Malaya," explored the Western gaze on various Malayan communities' food culture in the middle to late 19th century as Malaya was evolving into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society with a mixed economy of global cash crops and traditional occupations. The contact between various Malayan communities, initially conceptualized as limited in J.S. Furnivall's plural society, but increasingly re-examined in newer scholarship (such as Su Lin Lewis' study on urban cosmopolitanism, *Cities in motion*), occurred mainly within the realm of the unrecorded, everyday lived experiences, unless captured by the Western gaze. Reflecting on the writings of Isabella Bird, Emily Innes and Harriette McDougall published in the 1880s, Gan demonstrated how the intersection of food and identity was expressed, understood and conceptualized by both the participants and observers. Their observations on the consumption of food, the preparation of meals, the social and cultural context of eating and drinking, and the various communities' relationship with their environment reveal a lively food culture that was the vanguard in cracking the plural society barriers among Malayan communities, forcing them to confront questions of identity while co-existing in a rapidly changing cultural, social, and economic milieu.

Chee-Kien Lai (Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore) delivered

Summer 2018



“Tropical Fruits and Overseas Chinese Identity in Singapore,” and reflected on research on the “exotic” fruits (such as the mango, jackfruit, mangosteen, papaya, Chinese fig, coconut, pineapple, *duku*, *langsai*, breadfruit, soursop, durian, and rambutan) discussed by overseas Chinese contributors to the *Journal of the South Seas Society*, published from the 1940s in Singapore. The heightened awareness of such fruits also permeated into the quotidian life of the overseas Chinese. The paper described the important role of fruits in transferring overseas Chinese identity from that of sojourner to potential resident. The ingestion of local fruits not only helped in adapting these migrants to their haptic consumption of local food, but also, the availability of these fruits only seasonally throughout the year assisted in their synchronizing or calibrating of tropical time to their own existential time. Lai demonstrated how the fruits themselves became assimilated forms of imagining and understanding of traditions, identities, and community in the “overseas Chinese” in Southeast Asia.

Mareike Pampus (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany) delivered “Chicken Kapitan: The Manifestation of Connectivity in Nyonya Cooking,” an anthropological exploration of how one Nyonya dish, Chicken Kapitan, demonstrates how the movements of tastes, ingredients and eating habits play a significant role, particularly in highly diverse places like port cities. Using the notion of “connectivity”—the merging of local and global influences and the movement of people, goods, and techniques—Pampus showed how socio-cultural adaptation took place among the Nyonya cooks of Penang to demonstrate that identities were shaped through and with food. Penang Nyonya cooking emerged as something

original and highly localized, neither a product of a homeland or a nation state, but one that was unique to this port city, its colonial past and its culturally mixed groups.

In her comment, Patricia Sloane-White (University of Delaware) noted that the three papers asked the audience to see globalization not as merely a destructive force, but as a long historical and cultural movement of people and things that produced innovative, novel, and hybrid forms of identity. The authors pointed to how food, fruit, and cooking provide us with a way to move beyond merely *theorizing* about global connections to actually clarifying, in specific moments and places, precisely how those interactions occurred in empire, diasporas, and port cities, producing, in effect, literally “recipes” for hybridity. Cheong Soon Gan’s paper provided a view into the wet markets and the kitchens of colonial interactions as they became “trans-cultural” and “incorporative.” Chee Kien Lai’s paper provided not just a theory of hybridization but insight into the actual hybridization of culture through botanical expertise as the overseas Chinese experimented with growing fruits that reminded them of home. And Mareike Pampus’ paper figuratively entered the cooking pot—and the Penang melting pot—where cultural symbols and food are both “chosen and recomposed” as Nyonya cooking.

All three papers pointed out that to understand how hybrid and interconnected identities were constructed in Malaya, Malaysia, and Singapore we must look closely at materiality, at the admixture of actual *things*—on the ground, in the vegetable gardens, in the markets, in the cooking pots, and in the orchards—to see how globalization affected the realm of the unrecorded, in everyday lived experience. Each

Summer 2018



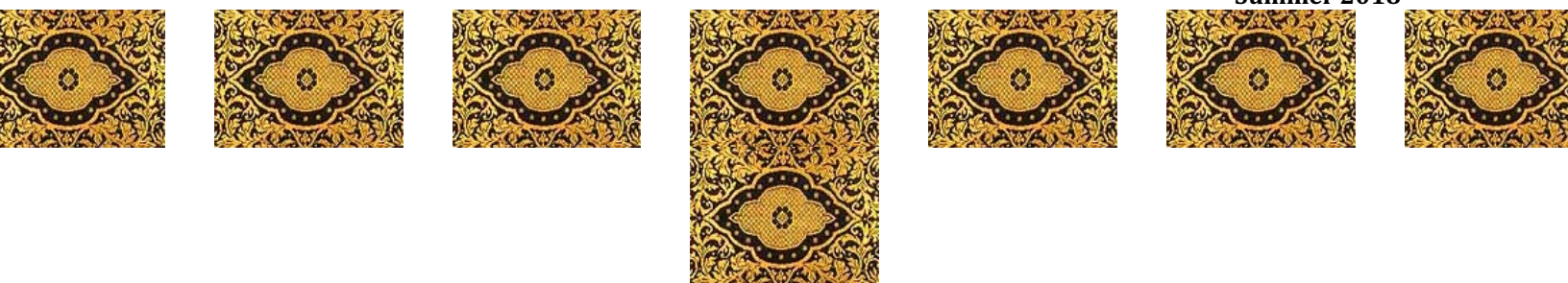
of the papers entered that space vividly: Cheong Soon Gan explored the smells, tastes, the chaos of markets to gain insight into the deep impress that the senses make in establishing Western colonial identities. Chee Kien Lai's paper described the literal consumption and internalization of a fruit that, reimagined, connected the overseas Chinese to places they had left and new places they sought to inhabit. In Mareike Pampus' paper, the deep corporeal experience of chopping, frying, grinding, and cooking in the ninyonya kitchen revealed how chefs both shared or held back the secrets of cultural and ethnic difference and belonging in their recipes.

In addition to exploring the concrete experience and the materiality of food and fruit, the papers also addressed the crucial notion of cultural expertise. The British colonial family in Cheong Soon Gan's paper had to be fed and sustained—if they were to survive in Malaya—by a multi-racial cast of experts who were capable of “rising to the challenge of feeding Europeans without access to European ingredients” but doing so in a way that not only changed the European way of eating and tasting, but also connected the local to the rest of the world—leading to familiarity, to new forms of expertise, and finally to the point at which groups in colonial spaces embraced the other as the norm. Chee Kien Lai's paper addressed how expertise took shape in the everyday—the perfectly rendered overseas Chinese painter's canvas that captured a strange fruit and made it known, the experimentation with crops and produce until a rambutan, however unfamiliar it first was to the diasporic Chinese, reminded them of a lychee, and not unlike Proust's famous madeleine, became a way for them to recall the sensations and tastes of home.

In Mareike Pampus' paper, we learned that the foundation of Nyonya cooking is expert knowledge—produced, circulated, and transmitted through women, whose very identity was established not just by knowing how to make a dish, and how to adjust it, but by demonstrating its most precise and refined techniques, marked by such things as fingers yellowed by turmeric, a trick of salt added at the right moment, and the finest possible cut of the kaffir lime leaves.

As a whole, the papers demonstrated how Malaya, Malaysia, and Singapore, situated both historically and geographically at crossroads of trade and migration, were buffeted by regional and global strands and provide us with insights about culture and identity that go beyond modern national boundaries. This panel ultimately considered how cultures feed off each other and “heat” each other up, or, to extend the food metaphor more fully, literally “cook” and ingest each other, allowing us to look how experiences of the global become specific, local, blended, and unique.

Summer 2018



Article

Social Categorization and Religiously Framed State-Making in Brunei: From Criminalizing Supernatural Healers to the Rise of Bureaucratized Exorcism

Dominik M. Müller

This paper has been presented at the workshop “Social Categorization and Religiously Framed State-Making in Southeast Asia, organized by the author together with Matthew Walton and Kevin W. Fogg at the Asian Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford on June 4–5, 2018. It is a shortened and modified version of an article that has been published in May 2018 by the Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 37(1): 141–183, entitled: “Hybrid Pathways to Orthodoxy in Brunei Darussalam: Bureaucratized Exorcism, Scientization and the Mainstreaming of Deviant-Declared Practices.” The full article is available at: <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jsaa/article/view/1105/1112>.

The Special Issue, entitled “The Bureaucratization of Islam in Southeast Asia: Transdisciplinary Perspectives”, guest-edited by Dominik M. Müller and Kerstin Steiner, contains further MSB Studies-related articles, including: “Company Rules: Sharia and its Transgressions in the Malay-Muslim Corporate Workplace” (Patricia Sloane-White), “Negotiating Statist Islam: Fatwa and State Policy in Singapore” (Afif Pasuni), and “Branding Islam: Islam, Law, and Bureaucracies in Southeast Asia” (Kerstin Steiner). The issue is available at: <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jsaa/article/view/1100/1107>

Introduction¹

The cultural and political position of Islam in Brunei is commonly described as conservative and orthodox. Portrayals of Brunei as a vanguard of “Islamization” have become increasingly prominent following international media reports in 2014 according to which “the Sultan” had “suddenly” decided to “implement the Sharia” (sic.). Since the 1980s, the government has undeniably formalized an increasingly restrictive state-brand of Islam and zealously aims to transform its citizenry into obedient subjects adhering to state-defined doctrines. However, generalized narratives of growing Islamization and orthodoxy explain little about the complex realities, social meanings and discursive embeddedness of Brunei’s Islamization policies, and how actors position themselves towards and within these processes and thus engage in everyday forms of the (un-)making and re-making of religiously framed state power.

Elsewhere, I have conceptualized the bureaucratization of Islam (BoI) as a social phenomenon that transcends its organizational boundaries, as categorical schemes of Islam diffuse into society and become appropriated (and potentially transformed) by social actors and institutions (Müller 2017). In settings such as Brunei, where governments have empowered Islamic institutions to influence Muslim discourse, the BoI often penetrates deeply into public discourse and everyday life in society. Therefore, the BoI is not simply a formalization, expansion and diversification of Islamic institutions, or a government attempt to control religious actors and neutralize opposition. It also affects socio-cultural transformations and subject formations,

¹ Research for this article was supported by the German Research Foundation’s Emmy Noether Program, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology’s Department “Law & Anthropology”, the National University of Singapore’s Centre for Asian Legal Studies, and Harvard University’s “Islamic Legal Studies Program: Law and Social Change.” I would like to thank Michael Peletz and Lawrence Rosen for their comments. I am indebted to my Bruneian interlocutors, and most grateful for the

exceptional openness of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the MIB Supreme Council’s Secretariat, and Darusysyifa’ Warrafahah, each of whom helped me with my research and gave me access to documents and data, while tolerating, as we spoke about explicitly, that my interpretations will likely differ from some of their positions. Most names other than public figures are pseudonyms, and some circumstantial information has been changed to protect identities.

although it does not determine them. The BoI furthermore goes along with a *bureaucratization of knowledge* and related processes of systematizing and reflecting, which Eickelman calls an “objectification of Muslim consciousness,” resulting in “a significant reimagining of religious and political identities.”² Accordingly, the BoI implies distinct epistemic modes of understanding and organizing the world. These fuse with other registers and transnational flows, alongside discursive frames of the nation state, and give rise to new cultural forms and social meanings of Islam.

The BoI is entrenched in the empowerment of “state forms of classification” and their “social frameworks of perceptions,” “understanding, “appreciation” and “memory” (Bourdieu 1994:13), which are inscribed to varying extents into the spheres of habitus. The state’s *classificatory power* is therefore not simply produced by state actors (in the term’s conventional sense), but *co-produced and contested in society* (Müller 2017), while the boundaries between state- and non-state spheres are blurring. In this sense, in certain contexts non-state actors become state-actors as well. Accordingly, symbolic power, of which state power and state-imposed social classification are manifestations, “presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission nor a free adherence to it” (Bourdieu 1991:50–1). Social actors within and beyond the bureaucracy position themselves in diverse ways: they do not simply internalize state-classification to a “taken-for-granted” and “commonsensical” level (Handelman & Shamgar-Handelman 1991:294), or circumvent, pragmatically adapt, subversively resist, or cautiously navigate between “public” and “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990), although

² Following this concept, Islam “has implicitly been systematized ... in the popular imagination, making it self-contained and facilitating innovation. Questions such as ‘What is my religion?’, ‘Why is it important to my life?’, and ‘How do my beliefs guide my conduct?’ have become foregrounded in the lives of large numbers of believers ... These transformations also mean that ‘authentic’ religious

all of this likely occurs and affects individual subject formations. Of most relevance here, they also *ascribe their own meanings* to hegemonic discourses and *creatively re-signify them*, which is only partly conditioned by existing power-knowledge regimes. Actors may submit to symbolic state power and participate in its social production simultaneously inform some of its contents in originally unanticipated ways. This paper illustrates such creative state-making with the example of an Islamic healing center that incorporates the symbolic language and categorical schemes of state power in Brunei. It specializes in exorcism, which had long been the domain of Malay supernatural specialists whose once-normalized practices have become bureaucratically categorized as *deviant*; growing segments of the population have internalized this position as commonsensical Islamic. In this context, the BoI affects cultural changes and everyday normativities, but it also informs agency and creative realizations of the state.

Classificatory Power in the MIB State

Brunei has been conceptualized by its government as a non-secular “Islamic State” and “Malay Islamic Monarchy” (*Melayu Islam Beraja*) since Independence in 1984. It never established a parliamentary democracy. Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah *embodies* state power more than any other Southeast Asian leader: he is the prime minister, minister of finance, of defence, of foreign affairs and trade, holds absolute executive powers, and is “head of the official religion,” i.e. Islam. Constitutionally, he “can do no wrong in either his personal or any official capacity.” The sultan enjoys enormous popularity and, as Bourdieu noted on states more (maybe too) generally, *personally* serves as the country’s “(central) bank of symbolic capital.”³ This popularity is not just fostered, choreographed and demanded by state-

tradition and identity are foregrounded,” but also “questioned, and constructed rather than taken for granted” (Eickelman 2015:605).

³ He strikingly resembles the “President” acting as the Mauss’ian “sorcerer” in Bourdieu’s (1994:11–12) essay on “structure and genesis in the bureaucratic field, also pertaining to the “monopoly over nomination”.

controlled institutions and media, it is also an undeniable (in a double-sense) social fact that contributes to upholding the political *status quo*. Another stabilizing factor is the oil-funded high living standards. The Sultan is widely considered to personally provide Brunei's welfare state as a "caring monarch," a discursively naturalized term that is normative for public speech. Poems and patriotic songs, e.g. those played in state-media during the sultan's three week-long birthday celebrations, similarly emphasize his benevolence and artistically reproduce the caring monarch motif.⁴ With compelling arguments: There is no personal income tax, a pension for all citizens from the age of 60, and largely free education and medical services.



FIGURE 1: Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah's 71st Birthday Celebrations (*Hari Keputeraan ke-71*), July 15, 2017. Bandar Seri Begawan. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©

The "hierarchical reciprocal relationship between the ruler and his subjects" (Siti Norkhalbi 2005:247) is also framed as representing a "traditional Malay" principle according to which *the ruler must be just, the people must be loyal*. Despite standing above the law, the Sultan is not perceived as an arbitrary ruler or dictator by any significant societal grouping. With his promotion of the rule of law and accountability, his rule comes closer to what

⁴ These activities also include patriotic competitions by artists, graffiti sprayers, poets, musicians and dancers, who create spaces of agency for themselves, simultaneously enabled and restricted by the event's royal/patriotic/state-controlled context (as I describe in forthcoming work on

Turner (2015) calls soft-authoritarianism in the Singaporean context.

Institutionalizing a National Ideology: Melayu Islam Beraja (MIB)

The government seeks to instill a "national ideology" called *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) in the population's minds and behavior. MIB privileges Malay supremacy, *Islam* (as interpreted by the state, no other Islam), and the monarchy. As a bureaucratic categorical scheme, MIB is at the heart of the state's attempted exercise of classificatory power. Officially, MIB has been in place since the first Sultan converted to Islam in 1368. In the Declaration of Independence, the Sultan proclaimed Brunei "*shall be forever a ... Malay, Muslim Monarchy upon the teachings of (Sunni) Islam.*" MIB became institutionalized, and Brunei-specific notions of *Melayu*, Islam, and the monarchy became translated into the language of bureaucracy. In 1986, an MIB Concept Committee was established, transformed in 1990 into the MIB Supreme Council. Since 1991/2, MIB classes are compulsory in schools and universities.

The MIB Supreme Council is defining, systematizing and propagating MIB. It prepares curricula, teaching materials, and publications. Its Secretariat constantly reminds citizens of their obligations towards the MIB State (*Negara MIB*). One of its leaders, Muhammad Hadi Muhammad Melayong (2013), argues that MIB's "values ... are innate for every Bruneian," a descriptive claim and normative expectation. In a former Minister of Education's words: "Every individual is responsible for practicing, appreciating, and strengthening the concept of MIB" (Dewan Majlis 2014:473). The government insists on exclusively defining MIB (its "interpretation must be protected"). MIB propagation underwent various changes. It is presently taught in a *more interactive* and *activating* manner, resembling transnational

the Royal Birthday). This can also be considered everyday forms of, to varying extents religiously framed, *state-making*, which are embedded in wider discursive arenas of locally unique Brunei-specific state-making.

pedagogical trends. Learners should become “multipliers.” The Council tries to “maximize” quantified “success rates.” Another new trend is to encourage “critical thinking”—about how to strengthen MIB. The Council pursues “five-year working plans” and distinguishes eight propagation fields and target groups. By “educationally empowering” these groups to themselves empower MIB, the authorities seek to *make* the BoI transcend its institutional boundaries: MIB should not simply be state-dictated and obeyed, but society should actively strengthen it and thus co-produce the state’s classificatory power. As the Council also integrates other institutions and companies under a “multi-agency approach,” boundaries between state, society and the market blur in many ways and the MIB-State takes a paramount interest in fostering a state-in-society understanding of good citizenship.



FIGURE 2: Secretariat of the MIB Supreme Council, Located at the University of Brunei Darussalam’s Campus, Gadong. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©

The Council’s outreach includes e.g. lectures, courses, briefings, exhibitions, camps, competitions and media propagation. Bruneians are intensely exposed to MIB discourse and its normative expectations for public and private behavior. They are not only subject to control and disciplining, but also to the MIB discourse’s everyday didactics and *meaning-production*. Even those who circumvent or deliberately resist the state’s pedagogical aspirations can rarely evade being affected by its symbolic power and classificatory practices. For Bruneians below 40, the MIB-educated generation, being MIB

citizens and being expected to present themselves as such in certain spaces has become inscribed, to varying extents, into their habitus. This is often accompanied by equally habitualized hidden transcripts, negotiations and insecurities, also among MIB propagators. Nevertheless, MIB deeply affects their lifeworlds.

The Firewall of MIB and its Supernatural Counterforces

As the Bruneian scholar Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad Kumpoh (2011:39) put it, somewhat paradoxically, in post-colonial Brunei the “status of religious tolerance ... remained unchanged,” but there have been “cultural changes where activities ... which did not conform to Islamic teaching could no longer be tolerated.” This may be a logical contradiction for the uninitiated (“tolerance unchanged” vs. “can no longer be tolerated”), but for many Bruneians it is not. It sums up two locally powerful themes: 1) feeling misrepresented by foreigners as intolerant/radical, whereas in reality, Bruneian Islam would be “moderate” and oriented towards “harmonious” relations with everybody; and 2) the banning of supernatural traditions that long have been central to everyday life. The latter, in the now hegemonic logic, is not a question of freedom of religious practice and thus (potentially) tolerable, but of protecting the very essence of Islam and Muslim souls.

In 2015, the Sultan famously called MIB a “firewall” against unwanted elements of globalization invading Brunei. The itself globalized metaphor’s underlying idea points to a long-standing view contrasting Brunei *Darussalam* (*Abode of Peace*) with a “zone of disorder” (Braighlinn 1992:51, 57) abroad. Undesired “external” elements are not just alternative readings of Islam, militant ideologies, non-Muslim missionaries, and “immoral” or “Westernized” behaviors, they also pertain to “widely accepted symbolism(s)” of the supernatural, which are deeply rooted in the Malay “cultural vocabulary” (a term borrowed from Herzfeld 1992:57). One “no longer tolerable” tradition that Asiyah az-Zahra Ahmad

Kumpoh (2011:50) mentions are “[c]elebrations at spirit shrines” (Müller 2017). The Islamic bureaucracy conceptualizes the state as a protector of Muslim souls: It is *obliged* and accountable towards God to realize the principle of *enjoining good and forbidding wrong*. Nowadays, the Malay mainstream similarly views many banned traditions as deviant and/or outdated. This view was fostered by state-Islamic education, but also takes inspiration from bottom-up trends. Other deviant-declared practices are certain Malay customs (*adat*) e.g. in wedding ceremonies, dances, dress, and some royal regalia. A government *khutbah* sermon recently told Muslims not to shake hands with members of the opposite sex who are not their spouses or certain relatives (*mahram*), an instruction that many, including state elites, ignored, and which is not enforced. In other fields, the bureaucracy takes action: A striking example is supernatural specialists/healers (*bomoh*). Their status has changed from “an indispensable figure in a Malay village” whose existence was largely “taken for granted” (Mohd Taib 1988:157) to a shadowy criminal figure who engages in *syirik* (sin) and *khurafat* (superstition, but the translation is misleading). Although the social institution of *bomoh* has long been widely accepted, under the MIB State’s claim to classificatory power, it can, *officially* and *under that term*, no longer be tolerated, resulting in far-reaching changes in everyday lifeworlds. *Bomoh* as a social institution, and certain individuals in particular have always been surrounded by ambivalence, due to their fascinating but suspicious access to invisible worlds (Peletz 1993:155). This ambivalence has been restructured and revalorized vis-à-vis policies that aim to govern individual practices/beliefs, and in ways that focus on the negative side of things. Thus, this transformation pushed forward by “state actors” engaging in social categorization is not a historical rupture *per se*, although the changes are dramatic.

Social Imaginaries and Bureaucratized Representations of Black Magic

Notwithstanding these normative shifts, beliefs in the omnipresence of sorcery remain integral

to social imaginaries and ontological realities. Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) officers showed me two exhibitions of confiscated magic objects: All had been “cleaned, as officer Khairul explained. Yet, sounds had come from the room after dark, nobody would enter it at night. He also narrated how a MoRA scholar had tested a talisman for “academic” purposes: “it worked, he was unable to cut his skin.”

Opened in 2007, a theme room called “Objects Leading to the Deviation from the True Doctrine” became the MoRA’s most popular exhibition. The purpose was pedagogical, to explain “what is prohibited, what you cannot do, and cannot sell.” Khairul added, “20 years ago, Islamic education was not as strong as now.” In particular, some elders would still trust *bomohs* and practice deviant traditions, although this would gradually change since the 1990s. Some exhibited objects had been used for protection from other people’s magic, for business profits, love magic, or to become temporarily invisible or invincible. There were protective bottles with mystical symbols, numbers and Arabic letters that “offenders” place above doors, and cooking/eating bowls with inscribed chants, kept in restaurants to enhance revenues.

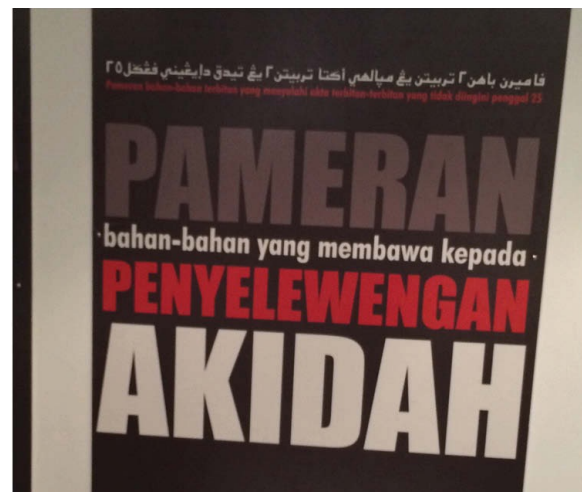


FIGURE 3: “Exhibition of Objects Leading to the Deviation from the True Doctrine (*akidah*)”. Ministry of Religious Affairs. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©



FIGURE 4: Confiscated Objects Assumedly Used for Magic Practices, on Exhibition for Educational Purposes. Ministry of Religious Affairs, Bandar Seri Begawan. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©.

Some restaurant owners had been elderly Malays “who still believe in such methods.” Khairul himself had investigated such a case. Elders would stop once they were “strongly exposed” to the “right information.” Other objects are protective rings, often found in a suspicious mix, e.g. wrapped in yellow cloth indicating “worshipping.” When objects are confiscated at post offices or borders, they are sent to the MoRA for investigation. Some are “harmless,” others are “used for special purposes, although owners themselves often don’t exactly know what.” Usually no legal action is taken but they remain confiscated. At the second exhibition of objects confiscated within the country, officers showed me pictures of a graveyard where photographs of a target person of sorcery had been buried, wrapped in underwear. They regularly find pictures. An officer joked, “we confiscate so many, we sometimes know the people on them, possibly it’s one of us!” This concerns many Bruneians: An MIB officer told me how friends recommended him not to use a photograph on Facebook, it could be used by enemies.



FIGURE 5: A Picture that Went Viral in Brunei in 2015, Reportedly Used to Harm a Civil Servant Named Hassan through Black Magic, Confiscated by Religious Authorities. Source: Social Media.

Arif, a Doctrine Control officer argued “theoretically *bomoh* practice can be good if it is not against Islam.” If a hospital is far away, a *good bomoh*, who, he added, should rather be called *orang pandai*, might provide helpful herbs. But even well-intentioned *orang pandai* would often unintendedly engage spirits/demons. There is no consensus what defines the difference between *bomoh* and *orang pandai* and whether they are *necessarily* “deviant.” The trend is to categorically view *bomoh* as deviant and *orang pandai* more undecidedly with mixed suspicion and admiration. *Bomoh* do not call themselves *bomoh* anymore, as the term has

acquired a de-legitimizing stigma. Some are called *Cikgu/Ustaz* (teacher), albeit in one case in 2017, a healer called himself *Yang Keramat Agong* (“holding superior powers”). Arif estimated “hundreds” of remaining *bomoh*, “70-80% foreigners,” mainly Indonesians. Local *bomoh* were mostly elders (“*kampung* people”), who learned “from generation to generation” and whose often-unintended deviance was mainly about interacting with *jin*. No next generation would follow them any longer. For many students, exchanging supernatural stories is part of their daily life, and in addition more subtle state-influences, some directly refer to state-power. Ramlee shared with me a “first hand story,” of which he was convinced, about a certain Prince having a room for his dagger collection that was haunted. A *keris* “stood in the room” haunted by several spirits, causing troubled family relations. The Prince, following the narration, called an Indonesian “good *bomoh*” who “cleaned” the room, performed prayers and brought away the *keris*, refusing any payment. Ramlee added that some believed the Prince himself has “powers”: “he can walk up walls, like Spiderman!” Ramlee also shared a story, known by other interlocutors, that the sultan’s late father, Omar Ali Saufuddin had supernatural powers “like other Sultans before” and could control the rain by twisting his moustache. The main institution responsible for “controlling” religious deviance is the MoRA’s Doctrine Control Unit. It organizes surveillance, temporal arrests, “faith rehabilitation,” and maintains a 24-hour hotline. 38 *bomoh* were arrested in 2004, 55 in 2005. Later statistics list smaller numbers. In 2001, first calls proposed *bomohs* “should register” (*Borneo Bulletin* 2001). Soon afterwards, the state’s stance became less ambivalent.

I interviewed Mas and his wife, who spied on a *bomoh*’s community for the MoRA as his “helpers.” Both have attractive private sector jobs and narrated their motivation as ethical: As the *bomoh* was cheating *and* spiritually harming his patients/disciples, spying was a “duty.” They fulfilled the expectation for good citizens to co-produce/strengthen the MIB state’s classificatory power as “multipliers” in society.

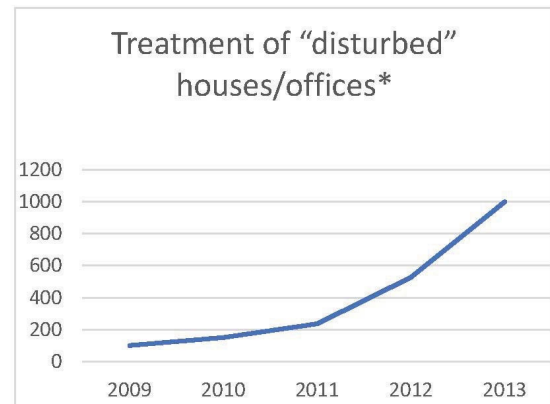
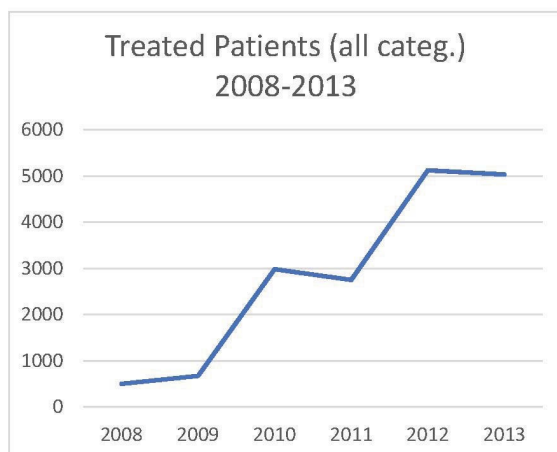
Bomoh cases are normally settled outside of courts, through warnings and “voluntary” re-education called counselling (*kaunseling*). In fact, the authorities focus on “education” and “mercy” much more than punishment. Yet, Arif lauded that the new Islamic penal code would place his work on more solid legal grounds: Muslims worshipping “any person, place, nature or any object, thing or animal in any manner” contrary to Islamic Law, or making “(a)n act or statement that shows faith to any object, thing or animal” possessing “power,” e.g. “the ability to bring good luck, increas(ing) wealth, grant(ing) wishes, heal(ing) diseases and others”, could be punished by imprisonment, fines and *kaunseling*. (Muslims claiming they “or any other person knows an event or a matter that is beyond human understanding, contradicting Islamic teachings: max. 10 years, caning, repentance; advertising black magic: max. 5 years; attempted murder max. 10 years, for further details see my original article).

Sharia-Compliant Healing, Water-Crystals and the Reconfiguration of “Deviant”-Declared Practices

Parallel to the socio-legal marginalization of *bomoh*, Brunei witnessed the rise of “Sharia-compliant” Islamic healing/exorcism. State-*ulama* have long conducted such practices officially and unofficially, but the most insightful example for my analytic purposes, and biggest trend, is Darusysyifa’ Warrafahah (DS), an institution locally established in 2007. Its model was the Malaysian Darusyifa’, founded by the late Haron Din, a former Islamic Studies professor and Spiritual Leader of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, PAS). Haron Din was Malaysia’s most prominent expert of the invisible world: his books were bestsellers, and he was admired across political divides. Many Bruneians admired him too, including a small group who first met him at a dinner at the palace and developed the idea of establishing a branch. Haron Din repeatedly visited Brunei upon the Sultan’s invitation and was “cleared” to teach/speak about Islam-related matters. As one

of the founders, a former civil servant from the education sector, narrated, it took time before they were able to receive permission from the Registrar of Organisations (ROS). They finally set up DS, a “non-state” Islamic organization, usually impossible to establish and non-existent in Brunei. *De facto* Haron Din was its supreme teacher, but *pro forma* it is an independent organization. Its “governing committee” reports all activities to the ROS, and the organizational structure follows the ROS’s obligatory pattern and bureaucratic terminology.

Brunei’s DS offers a *standardized* one-year curriculum course on the “basics of Islamic healing, using Haron Din’s writings. Students learn purpose-specific Quranic verses, recitation patterns and “ethics.” Their Certificate entitles them to practice as volunteers at the center and/or privately. In 2014, 500 people were actively involved (in 2017, the number had grown to 700!), from diverse backgrounds, but all were necessarily Muslims. Patients also included non-Muslims, e.g. Chinese Bruneians, Filipino and Thai guest workers, and a Japanese manager who hired DS after spectacular “disturbances” in his company. The number of certified healers and treated patients/places grew annually.



FIGURES 6, 7 & 8: Numbers of Patients Treated, Healers Certified and Houses/Offices “Cleaned” by DS Annually in Brunei. Source: Courtesy of Darusysyifa’ Warrafahah.

DS categorizes three treatment fields: “Physical,” “spiritual,” and “disturbances.” Disturbances are caused by *jin* and/or sorcery, affect individuals or places, and may result in “possession” or “hysteria”. They may also be manifested by poisoning, a classical *bomoh* tool in Malay social imaginaries. Sometimes *jin* “accompany” people, some consciously own and feed them, until “in the end, the *jin* owns them.” *Jin* ownership can also be hereditary. During exorcism, Muslim *jin* would often leave the body “if they are told in Islamic terms, but not always!” Infidel *jin* are considered more challenging, but they can convert, which is utilized in exorcism strategies. One should avoid speaking with them (“they lie the whole time”), but if they want to convert, healers must assist. *Jin* speaking

through possessed patients happened “twice a week.” More frequent disturbances are not manifested by alien voices. “Often there is no clear identification of the cause: *jin*, *syaitan*, we don’t want to know, what counts is successful healing!”

When I visited the center one evening in 2014, all 10 treatment rooms were occupied. I witnessed a “disturbance” treatment: Maryam’s sister had tried to heal her “by copying DS without knowing the right method, then a *jin* became involved,” a healer explained. Black spots emerged on her skin, she went to DS. A female healer exorcized Maryam, who made long buzzing noises before throwing up when the *jin* assumedly left her body, a pattern the healer expected. I was told this is a dangerous moment. In its previous smaller building, spirits “sometimes jumped from one person to the next.” The situation improved after the DS clinic was enlarged, with partitions to provide enclosed treatment spaces, partly enabled by funding from the private sector, from which DS continues to receive donations. After the exorcism, Maryam received a mixture of herbal leaves and rice powder to shower with. Medicines can be purchased but are free for patients. In most other cabins, counselling took place for issues such as social/family problems, to be solved by Quranic rather than traditional *bomoh* means. Many patients visited *bomoh* before they came, a DS healer stated. Common advice is to pray the right prayers in the right way, remember Allah, and observe Islamic norms for social behavior.



FIGURE 9: A Certified Darusyifa’ Healer Treating a Woman Assumed to be “Disturbed.” Kampong Manggis. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©

DS also exorcizes *state buildings*, e.g. the national hospital, university, and an Arabic school for girls (closed after mass-hysteria).⁵ DS’ first graduation ceremony was held at a Ministry of Defence building. In return, DS “cleaned” it. Disturbances had occurred, particularly after dawn: A soldier “heard somebody calling him, found a man at a table, asked why he had called him, suddenly the person was gone!” During the exorcism “a door opened and closed by itself, but not in the direction in which it would have been pushed by the wind, the other direction! Banners at the wall were shaking, a lamp stopped working.” After the exorcism the disturbances stopped. DS also cleaned the Friendship Bridge to Malaysia to secure its ceremonial opening. A worker had seen “an old Honda Accord” on the not-yet-opened bridge occupied by a man and

⁵ In 2010, a “mass hysteria” hit three schools during examinations time. Even “teachers” and “the school’s cook” were “possessed,” before DS ... solved it. It began when a “student cried after seeing a spirit.” A teacher commented “the spirit also made several demands. But the religious

expert ... told us not to meet the demands as it was the voice of Satan” (ibid.) The acting *Minister of Education* “advised the school authorities to clean the restrooms, believed to be the favorite spot for the spirits ...” (see my original article for references and further details)

child. While asking what they were doing there, “the car suddenly vanished.”

But DS’s engagement with state power goes beyond state-prescribed bureaucratic forms and cleaning jobs. When the first healers graduated, the sultan launched a DS event at the Convention Centre. His son Prince Malik became DS’ “patron.” Princes Sufri and Jefri, the sultan’s brothers, also visited DS events. These visits expressed royal endorsement and provided the locally most powerful form of symbolic capital. Photographs in DS annual reports documented this legitimation of the highest order. DS’s graduation reports share a similar structure: A full-page portrait of His Majesty on the first page, Prince Malik on the second. In 2013, the third page carried a text thanking Prince Malik and emphasizing popular “trust” in DS, adding that “the people” now turn away from *bomoh*. In the first report, a picture showed Harun Din standing next to the Sultan, the Crown Prince, and Prince Malik, symbolizing his royal acceptance. A picture of the State Mufti on the same page symbolized the Islamic bureaucracy’s equally crucial endorsement. In 2009 the Mufti, himself a book and fatwa author on Islamic healing, inaugurated the year’s course with a speech. Some course events were held on the MoRA’s premises, which underlines its proximity (“blurring boundaries”) to the state’s BoI. The DS leaders I spoke with stressed their contribution to MIB and the Sultan’s goal of Brunei as *Negara Zikir* (“a nation that always remembers *Allah*”) under his Vision 2035⁶. Through all these references to and cooperation with state power, DS stages conformity with the MIB State’s normative expectations for good citizenship, expressed through powerful symbolic codes in a specific cultural vocabulary. It is a *necessary condition* for its existence to co-produce the MIB State’s classificatory power, yet its leaders passionately believe in that project.

⁶ In another instance of appropriating powerful state symbols in legitimating their work, DS members told me how the Sultan once saw a possessed girl at a school in 2005, asking the *jin*: “Why do you possess her? Get out of this girl!” He was successful, “because he is the *khailfah*.” He has

But through the very act of establishing DS, they not only reproduce state power but also inform some of its meanings in ways that were neither originally planned nor expected by the architects of the government’s BoI. They created spaces of agency by *appropriating symbolic state power* for their own purposes.

Some certificate holders are *ex-bomoh*: “Some admit it openly,” but DS would not ask about “earlier mistakes,” following Haron Din’s advice not to expose sins. They believed that the role of *bomoh* was declining due to DS work, state education, and the MoRA’s *dakwah*. As one representative stated enthusiastically, “now there is an alternative!” There is clearly demand. An academic told me how his father had practiced traditional healing in the family before attending DS’s course to learn the proper way. Just like former *bomoh*, people like him can purify and re-legitimize their work vis-à-vis hegemonic power-knowledge structures and simultaneously protect their souls. The strong interest in the services previously provided by *bomoh*, now by DS, results from requirements that persist. Peletz (1993:150) described sorcery and consulting *bomohs* in Malaysia as “counterparts of formal social exchange” relating to personal vulnerabilities and “concerns with autonomy and social control.” Supernatural knowledge (*ilmu*) entails “power to influence other people and to maintain one’s autonomy in the face of countervailing forces invoked by others who aim to limit it,” particularly “in societies in which one never really knows what is in the minds of others.” In the MIB State, the normative parameters for handling such anxieties have shifted, resulting in a gap that DS, with its bureaucratically certified services, offers to fill.

MoRA officers stressed that “not everything labelled DS” was unproblematic; e.g. a *bomoh* had falsely claimed certification. Even certified healers would “not all practice the right way.”

powers, not only over humans, over everything, over all *makhluk* (creations) in his country.” They added: Some loggers tell trees, themselves *makhluk*, creations of Allah, they have the Sultan’s permission (compare Skeat 1900:194).

One had touched a woman claiming a *jinn* made him do it. Another “misused” a certificate he brought to *kaunseling* to prove his innocence. Some “turn to the wrong direction again.” Such transgressions indicate yet other modes of creating agency by appropriating powerful symbols of the state; namely by reference to DS’ state-approved bureaucratic certification and the authorizing powers it provides (in the age of “self-making-by-faking,” Comaroff & Comaroff 2016:xvii).

DS healing services for free. Patients “can donate if they wish” and “pay as much as they like.” *Bomoh* and *orang pandai* use the same wording. DS is funded by donations, but also sells products exposed to prayers (herbs, oil, honey). This, too, presents an uneven continuation of *bomoh* practices of praying into oil or water, although DS views these as entirely different: one realizes divine normativity through authentic verses, the other engages demonic forces, through lacking education or on purpose. DS’s bestselling item during in 2014 was prayed-upon water, stored in large boxes at its premises.



FIGURE 10: Pictures of Water-Crystals (“Before” and “After Having Been Exposed to Prayers”, and “*zam-zam* Water”) Placed at the Walls of DS’ Headquarters. Kampong Manggis. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©



FIGURE 11: Healing Products (That Have Been Exposed to Prayers, *sudah dizikirkan*) on Sale at DS’ Headquarters. Kampong Manggis. Picture by Dominik M. Müller ©

DS leaders showed me a PowerPoint Presentation visualizing the powers of their healing water through microscopic photographs of water crystals. DS had sent frozen samples to a Japanese water photographer, M. Emoto (1943-2014). Emoto was internationally renowned among esoteric circles for his water experiments. In academia, his work is dismissed as pseudo-scientific, to which he once responded it was merely art. For my interlocutors, it possessed academic character. This added yet another cultural register and powerful vocabulary of legitimation, which is inherent to the BoI: the quest for scientific evidence in the construction of facts (Latour & Woolgar 1979), and its importance for convincing others. Samples included average water, water exposed to “4444 prayers” (*selawat tafriyyah*), to *zikir* prayers, and *zam-zam* water from Mecca. Emoto assumes water “has a memory” (acoustic/visual): Negative influences “break the micro-crystals” but water also “remembers” positive influences. Going beyond Emoto’s interpretive frame, the DS leaders stated “water is a creation of Allah” (*makhluk Allah*). And going beyond established

Sunni discourse, they explained water “can hear” and “has feelings.”

Emoto compared DS’s samples with others, e.g. exposed to rock music. He was fascinated, they told me. The pictures left little doubt: Prayed-upon water exhibited the “most beautiful” structures. Other samples had gradually less fine structures. Heavy metal-exposed water was the “worst, destroyed.” The crystals exposed to *zikir* prayers looked exceptional, but the *tafrijyah*-exposed water (by Haron Din) went even beyond that: “Emoto had never seen anything like that!” For DS, Emoto’s pictures and the PowerPoint presentation *visualized the invisible* and objectively proved their work’s effectiveness. The scientific character was also stressed at a DS symposium in 2013, attended by Emoto, Haron Din, and the State Mufti. Emoto presented a “working paper,” “The Science of Beautiful Water”. The program, mistakenly calling him “Prof.” described Emoto as a “scientific expert” (*pakar saintifik*) presenting “scientific findings.”

Pictures of water crystals decorated a wall in DS’s building. The cover of one graduation report also showed crystals. These, and the ideas attached to them, had become part of DS’s culture of self-presentation. DS’ sold its water for 70c. per bottle (“some people drink it every day”) as a medicine, and for protection from harm or disturbances, which, earlier would have been done e.g. through talismans, or water (or other natural products) prayed-upon by a *bomoh*.

Concluding Remarks: Hybrid Pathways to State-Imposed Orthodoxy

As a *socio-cultural phenomenon*, the BoI in Brunei is deeply informed by the MIB State’s discursive substrate and its political economy. Boundaries between state and society are in many ways *made* blurring through educational means, and by non-state actors themselves who appropriate the state’s powerful symbolic forms and bureaucratic schemes. Therefore, the BoI informs social and cultural transformations, as the state’s classificatory schemes diffuse into society and become actively embedded in everyday lifeworlds. Yet, the BoI does not simply

determine these transformations, as the case of DS and the creative agency involved illustrates. Such appropriations of (symbolic) state power do not simply reproduce it, but also often serve to ascribe new meanings to it and thus engage in their own modes of religiously framed state-making. The politics of self-declared orthodox purification become creatively re-embedded into both pre-existing cultural vocabularies and the discursive arena of the nation state, while simultaneously drawing upon transnational cultural flows from multiple sources. Some deviant-declared practices become reinvented within the symbolic parameters of the MIB State, alongside the more universal languages of bureaucracy, cultural globalization, modern nationalism, marketization, and scientization, statisticalization and technocratization (see e.g. Greenhalgh 2008), among various other hybridized registers. The reconfiguration at play here departs from, but goes beyond what Herzfeld (1992:35, see my original article for further discussion) calls “the organic part played by symbols in creating the new order out of the old”: The MIB State’s BoI, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, of which bureaucratized exorcism is one of many manifestations, here also integrates a vertiginous mixture of other influences, such as Japanese water-photography, the objectifying powers of PowerPoint, digital metaphors, future-oriented corporate governance, and transnational trends in pedagogy. Such accommodative reconfigurations should not be surprising, as they reflect a more general global condition. What makes the Bruneian case special, among other things, is how the MIB State, and “state actors” in the term’s expanded sense, seek to purify local culture through zealous Islamization policies, yet the pathways towards realizing this orthodoxy are remarkably hybrid. Such micro-level negotiations of state power, and of ascribing/deriving one’s own meanings from/to the state, tell a different story from the meta-narratives of state-driven Islamization that dominate portrayals of Brunei and often narrowly draw upon official policies, government declarations, and legal provisions. Bureaucratized thinking, speaking and planning

informs the quest for objectified evidence-making, as manifested in DS's case of water-photography or the MIB bureaucracy's statistical success rates, "visions and missions" and five-year-plans, among others. The systematization and reflection that Eickelman (2015) calls an "objectification of Muslim consciousness" form a necessary condition. In objectified modes of being Muslim, earlier practices and social institutions, such as the *bomoh*, are systematically re-examined vis-à-vis their (un)Islamicness. Yet, subsequent "abandonments" are *culturally productive* endeavors and should be analyzed as such, instead of reproducing their self-idealizing logics by describing them in their own terms. The alternative would be what Bourdieu et al. (1994:1) call "the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a thought of the state, i.e. of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state."

Simultaneously globalized and unique, the MIB State has its own "culture of world-making, truth making, knowledge-making, state-making, nation-making" in a world where actors engage in an "endless quest to recapture" what once had been "sovereign certainties of modernity, certainties that seem to be slipping away, widely mourned, irrecoverable" (Comaroff 2016:xiv). In this longing for certainties, the more impossible it gets to draw fixed boundaries, the more passionate (if not desperate) many actors try to (re-)install them. The BoI's quest for objectified evidence is integral to such searching for undisputable certainties. Yet, social actors within and beyond the state apparatus, themselves also construct, modify, and sometimes challenge the truths of states that claim sovereignty over their lives. Members of DS in this sense *participate* in such religiously framed state-, nation-, knowledge- and truth-making processes through creative techniques and seek to bring order into a world that they perceive as being fundamentally threatened by a dialectical interplay of visible and invisible disturbances.

References

- Asiyah az-Zahra A. Kumpoh (2011), Islamic Da'wah in Brunei: Past Developments, Challenges and Future Prospects, *Jurnal Darussalam*, 11, 38–60.
- Borneo Bulletin (2001), Bomohs should register, August 9.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991), "The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate Language", in J.B. Thompson (ed.), *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 43–65.
- Bourdieu, P., Wacquant, L. & Farage, S. (1994), Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure in the Bureaucratic Field, in: *Sociological Theory*, 12, 1, 1–18.
- Braighlinn, G. (1992), *Ideological Innovation under Monarchy: Aspects of Legitimation Activity in Contemporary Brunei*. Amsterdam: VU University Press.
- Comaroff, J.&J. (2016), *The Truth About Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Dewan Majlis (2014), *Laporan Majlis Mesyuarat Negara*.
- Eickelman, D. (2015), "Transnational Religious Identities (Islam, Catholicism, Judaism): Cultural Concerns," in James Wright, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Oxford: Elsevier, 602–606.
- Greenhalgh, S. 2008. *Just One Child: Science and Policy in Deng China*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: UC Press.
- Handelman, D. and Shamgar-Handelman, L. (1991), Celebrations of Bureaucracy: Birthday Parties in Israeli Kindergartens, *Ethnology* 30, 4, 293–312.
- Herzfeld, M. (1992), *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*, New York: Berg.
- Latour, B. and Woolgar, S. (1979), *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, London/Beverly Hills: Sage.
- M.T. Osman (1988), *Bunga Rampai: Aspects of Malay Culture*, Kuala Lumpur: DBP.
- M. Hadi M. Melayong (2013), Brunei Raya Celebrations a Reflection of MIB Concept, in: *Brunei Times*, August 26.
- Müller, D.M. (2017), *The Bureaucratization of Islam and its Socio-Legal Dimensions in Southeast Asia*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper, No. 187.
- Peletz, M. (1993), Knowledge, Power, and Personal Misfortune in a Malay Context, in C.W. Watson & R. Ellen, eds., *Understanding Witchcraft and Sorcery in Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 149–177.
- Scott, J. (1990), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.
- Siti Norkhalbi Wahsalfelah (2005), *Traditional Woven Textiles: Tradition and Identity Construction in the 'New State' of Brunei Darussalam*, PhD Thesis, Univ. of Western Australia.
- Skeat, W.W. (1900), *Malay Magic: Being an Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula*, London: Macmillan.
- Turner, B. (2015), Soft Authoritarianism, Social Diversity and Legal Pluralism: The Case of Singapore, in *ibid.*, A. Possamai & J. Richardson eds., *The Sociology of Shar'ia: Case Studies from Around the World*, Leiden: Springer, 66–82.

Article

A New Dawn for Malaysia: The Election that Tipped the Balance

Mohamed Nawab Osman, Aida Arosoaie,
Rashaad Ali, Prashant Waikar, Chan Xin
Ying and Najwa Abdullah

On May 9, 2018, Malaysians made history. For the first time since 1957, the incumbent coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) suffered a devastating defeat both in the state and federal legislative assemblies. With the exception of the then-opposition's leader, Mahathir Mohamad, the final polls bewildered the wider public, scholars and numerous Malaysian politicians. When everyone predicted a marginal victory for the BN, Mahathir rallied across Peninsular Malaysia prophesying that his coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH), would re-write the fate of Malaysian politics. The 92-year-old astute politician, also Malaysia's longest serving prime minister from 1981 until 2003, switched sides in 2015 when he broke away from the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the leading party of BN, to form his own political outfit Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu). And so begins the GE14 (14th Malaysian General Election) saga.

The fractionalization of UMNO and the Mahathir persona were crucial factors that led to BN's defeat, but they were not the most important. Instead, two other issues emerged as key factors of this election which informed the electorate's change of heart, and government. Firstly, voters across all states complained about the rising cost of living, blaming it squarely on the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). This explains the markedly populist nature of the different political parties' manifestos. The BN manifesto proposed establishing a special bank to facilitate loans for affordable and low-cost housing priced RM300,000 and below.¹ The PH promised to

abolish the GST, while PAS has offered to provide monthly financial assistance and cash incentives to single mothers, the youth and the poor. Secondly, race and religion remained important considerations for many voters, even if explicitly or implicitly acknowledged. BN continued playing the religious card in trying to win the support of Muslim voters especially in the northern states. The UMNO incumbent Chief Minister of Terengganu promised the party would allow for the implementation of hudud in the event of its victory. PAS has also invoked religion in its campaign within Kelantan, describing the party's struggle to hold the Kelantanese government as a *jihad* (holy struggle). Fearing a potential tacit understanding between Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)—the country's main Islamist party—and UMNO, which would lead to further decimation of their rights, many non-Muslim voters chose to support the Pakatan Harapan. The decision was mostly based on PH's apparently more inclusive policies vis-à-vis the management of religion. The use of religion was not limited to Muslim politicians. In Sabah, Maximus Ongkili, a member of the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), joined a prayer session with church leaders at his residence to pray for this victory in the polls. Yet, beyond contextualized strategic use, neither BN, PH nor PAS made race and religion the focus of their manifestos. However, the results emphasized the continued relevance of these issues, as they informed both parties' choice of fielding candidates and the electorate's preferences.

Rotting From Within: UMNO's Fractionalization

In 2015, the 1 Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a strategic development fund managed entirely by the Minister of Finance, made headlines worldwide as one of the biggest corruption cases in the world. Former Prime Minister Najib Razak, the Chairman of the fund, was accused of having siphoned USD\$700 million from the investment fund into his own

¹ "Bersama BN Hebatkan Negaraku," *Barisan Nasional*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.barisannasional.org.my/wp->

<content/uploads/2018/04/Manifesto-Barisan-Nasional-Bersama-BN-Hebatkan-NegaraKu-Malay.pdf>

account. The US Justice Department filed a lawsuit against Najib, revealing that most the money was spent on purchases of yachts and properties, jewelry, Picasso and Van Gogh paintings and the production of two Hollywood movies.² In a shocking move Mahathir left UMNO to form his own party, Bersatu, as a sign of protest against Najib's misconduct: Mahathir claimed he was too embarrassed to be associated with a corrupt party.³

With Bersatu joining the opposition, Mahathir had to join hands with Anwar Ibrahim, his former Deputy Prime Minister whom he ousted and subsequently jailed in 1998 on charges of corruption and sodomy.⁴ They formed a leadership configuration which turned out to be defining for GE14. Their dynamic can be better understood as a contest of masculinities, wherein both Mahathir and Anwar, the former notorious for his iron fist rule from 1981 until 2003, adopted distinctively feminine traits to mark the state of the emergency of the country: Mahathir released a video in which he wept while expressing his remorse for supporting Najib's political ascendancy,⁵ and both Mahathir and Anwar forgave each other, labelling their gesture as a sacrifice for the Malaysian people.⁶ At the core of the matter, they both highlighted, lied million Malaysians, with an emphasis on the Malays, whom Najib betrayed with his corrupt behavior.

The state of Johor, a semi-urban state with a mixed ethnic population, provides a useful example for examining national trends at the state level. Barisan Nasional suffered significant defeats in Johor, a state it has traditionally dominated.⁷ Pakatan Harapan (PH) succeeded in

winning 18 of 28 parliamentary seats, building on their five seats from the last general election in 2013. At the state assembly level, PH won 36 of the 56 seats. This became 39 seats after three UMNO state assemblymen switched to PH, thus giving the coalition two-thirds majority.⁸ BN's defeat in Johor can be attributed to two main factors: former Prime Minister Najib Razak's unpopularity and cost-of-living issues. Due to the various scandals surrounding his administration, Najib's unpopularity proved too much to stave off the image the Barisan Nasional state government in Johor had carefully curated. Much of the campaign was dedicated to the successes of the state government, employing the state-level nationalism of Bangsa Johor to specifically appeal to Johorean's identity and co-opting this in their favor. The state government went to great lengths to divorce their image from Najib, which included eschewing Najib's image on their campaign material from brochures to billboards, creating their own detailed manifesto, and not inviting him to Johor during the campaign period.⁹ BN was already experiencing a downward voting trend in the past two elections, including in traditional Malay/Felda areas while many seats particularly at the parliament level were marginal.¹⁰ So, although BN was expected to lose some seats, the extent of their losses is truly significant especially given the efforts made by the local administration to disassociate themselves from the federal government. Despite this, Johor citizens issued a protest vote against Najib at the ballot box.

The results in Sabah, one of the two East Malaysian states, further emphasized this point.

² H. Ellis-Petersen (2018), "Malaysian PM claims there was no wrongdoing in 1MDB scandal," *The Guardian*, April 26.

³ "I will never return to 'badly damaged' UMNO, says Dr Mahathir," *The Malaysian Insight* (2017), July 28.

⁴ T. Pepinsky (2018), "Can Mahathir Mohamed be Malaysia's First Democratically Elected Prime Minister?" *Asia Unbound*, Council for Foreign Relations.

⁵ "2018 Dr. Mahathir Cried (Touching)," *Youtube*, April 28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3dhMBQLKgU>

⁶ H. Ellis-Petersen (2018), "'This election is personal': Mahathir Mohamad, 92, vows to stop 'corrupt' protégé,"

The Guardian, May 2.

⁷ F. E. Hutchinson (2018), "GE-14 in Johor: The Fall of the Fortress?," *Trends in Southeast Asia*, No.3.

⁸ Amar Shah Mohsen (2018), "Don't rush decisions, prioritise party members, Muhyiddin tells Johor MB," *The Sun Daily*, May 16.

⁹ R. Ali (2018), "Commentary: To win over Johor voters, politicians compete to represent the Johor identity," *Channel NewsAsia*, May 8.

¹⁰ F. E. Hutchinson (2018), "GE-14 in Johor: The Fall of the Fortress?," *Trends in Southeast Asia*, No.3.

In the 2013 Malaysian General Election (GE13), Barisan Nasional won 88% of Sabah's parliamentary seats and 80% of the state assembly seats.¹¹ In Sarawak, the other state in East Malaysia, BN won over 80% of the federal seats.¹² GE14 saw a dramatic shift in BN's electoral fortunes. It won just 40% of federal seats and 48% of state seats in Sabah.¹³ Since then, the Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan)-PH pact formed the state government after a BN component party United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (UPKO) defected, an episode equally dramatic as the formation of Bersatu.¹⁴ In Sarawak, BN won only 60% of federal seats. These trends are self-explanatory given that, traditionally, East Malaysia has been referred to as a "fixed deposit" for BN. Considering that, collectively, Sabah, Sarawak, and the Federal Territory of Labuan account for 57 federal seats, or nearly 26% of the federal legislative, East Malaysian votes have historically been particularly important for BN's efforts to retain the federal government. Based on this, observers of Malaysian politics predicted that, while PH would likely perform well in Peninsular Malaysia—perhaps even better than in GE13—it would make dismal inroads into East Malaysia, even if it had secured an electoral pact with the Parti Warisan Sabah.¹⁵ This renders BN's poor performance in East Malaysia particularly significant to note. To understand how this came to be, the interplay between local and national politics needs to be interrogated.

In the immediate aftermath of GE14, talk of defections within BN Sabah was rife. Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRS) quit the coalition,

and both UPKO and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) defected to the Warisan-Pakatan alliance.¹⁶ The sudden fluidity of political alliances pointed out already existing structural fissures within BN Sabah, which were probably hitherto placated by relatively large election wins. Most likely, the waning support for BN in GE13—nearly a third of wins were marginal—led to internal frustration within the coalition over electoral strategies and envisioned goals.¹⁷ Such frustrations were accentuated by the departure of Shafie Apdal from BN, a former UMNO Vice-President and former Minister, who in 2015 quit Najib's administration to found Warisan and enter into an electoral pact with PH. Apdal's decision rattled BN Sabah, just as Mahathir's defection rattled UMNO in Peninsular Malaysia. In light of this, Warisan made Shafie central to its election campaign by highlighting him as the champion the Sabahans' rights, while juxtaposing him against Musa Aman, whom many accused of complicity with the federal government for disregarding pertinent issues concerning Sabah.¹⁸

A Veritable Malaysian Tsunami

Another important factor which caused BN's poor performance at the federal level fared was its failure to engage what emerged as the voters' most important consideration during this election: the rising cost of living and inflation, manifestations of which are the GST and the government's corruption scandals. For example, Serina Abdul Rahman remarked that many of the rural Malay voters in Johor declared their switch of allegiance from UMNO to PH as temporary: while still UMNO supporters at heart, many individuals cast against Najib and the GST.¹⁹

¹¹ G.K. Brown & R. Lim (2013), "Report 5: General Election 2013: Sabah," in K.B. Teik ed., 13th General Election in Malaysia: Issues, Outcomes and Implications," IDE-JETRO.
¹² Khoo Boo Teik (2013), "Report 1: 13th General Election in Malaysia: Overview and Summary," in K.B. Teik ed., 13th General Election in Malaysia: Issues, Outcomes and Implications," IDE-JETRO.

¹³ Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (2018), "Statistik Keseluruhan Bagi Parlimen PRU14," *ibid.* (2018) "Statistik Keseluruhan Bagi DUN PRU14."

¹⁴ A. Azhar (2018), "Six switch sides, Warisan has majority with 35 seats," *Malaysiakini*, May 11.

¹⁵ A. Puyok & P. Waikar (2018), "Why it is unlikely that Sabah will swing to the opposition," *Today*, May 8.

¹⁶ Malaysiakini (2018), "PBRS is third party to leave Sabah BN," May 12.

¹⁷ G.K. Brown & R. Lim (2013), "Report 5: General Election 2013: Sabah," in K.B. Teik ed., 13th General Election in Malaysia: Issues, Outcomes and Implications," IDE-JETRO.

¹⁸ *Borneo Today* (2018), "Musa Aman has failed Sabahans, Sabah remains poorest state – Jeffrey Kitingan," April 19.

¹⁹ Presentation delivered by Serina Abdul Rahman during the Asian Research Institute-S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (ARI-RSIS) roundtable "The 14th

Contrary to voters' sentiments, BN's campaign focused on their good track-record in state and federal governance, the virtues of a stable government, and the potential evil posed by the opposition to Malay voters. Yet, BN's dissonance with the grievances of the larger Malaysian public backfired across the country, especially as the coalition misunderstood the extent of public discontent. Inflation in Johor is higher than the national average, and so thousands of Malaysians commute daily to Singapore in search of a better pay.²⁰ Given the low exchange rate between the Singaporean dollar and Malaysian ringgit, many Johoreans felt disgruntled with their financial situations. In Penang, MCA's strategy of capitalizing on China's *One Belt One Road* project in Malaysia hardly attracted the voters' attention. Instead, voters were more concerned with bread-and-butter issues, such as GST and toll taxes, which constituted the backbone of the Democratic Action Party's (DAP) campaigning.²¹ The Sabahan Warisan-Pakatan pact and PH Sarawak also leveraged on the nationwide anger at the GST and corruption issues in order to catalyze big swings from BN, especially in Chinese-majority seats where voting patterns mirrored the Peninsular. What is more, parties with a firm regional outlook from both Sabah and Sarawak were decimated at the polls, suggesting that East Malaysian politics is evolving beyond parochialism. Amidst these trends, five BN candidates in Sarawak and nine BN candidates in Sabah won with increased majorities.²² These contradictory patterns indicate that the appeal of the individual candidate may matter more than party politics in certain constituencies. What is

clear, though, is that BN can no longer afford complacency and treat East Malaysia as a vote bank.

BN's campaign content had glitz and high-quality production, but it ultimately failed to connect with the people at an emotional level. For example, it was unable to compete with PH's approach that better engaged voters. Campaign content appeared sincerer on PH's end. Mahathir's video to save the country, for instance, was perceived as more sensitive to the *rakyat's* socioeconomic grievances.²³ Conversely, BN's campaigns failed to address GST and cost of living issues, which were key drivers of GE14's Malaysian tsunami. Instead, it hyped up the economy by showing GLC bosses promoting BN's economic track record via the *Hebat Negaraku* song²⁴, along with videos of pro-GST citizens and AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes' crediting his company's success to the Najib administration²⁵—all of which gave the impression that BN was indifferent to people's concerns and predicaments. These focuses on past achievements are unappealing—if not irrelevant—to the wired youth whose concerns for the country are grounded in anxieties about the future. In that case, PH gained momentum amongst the youth and angry voters through its manifesto and campaign strategies that reflect a vehement spirit for reform. BN's historic loss at the hands of PH was a battle lost on various fronts, including social media. Compared to GE12 and GE13, BN's social media machinery established far savvier campaigns featuring viral videos, influencers, trending slogans like #Negarakru and #HebatkanNegaraku. Nevertheless, this proved to be insufficient to

General Election of Malaysia: A New Dawn for Democracy?" June 4, 2018, Singapore.

²⁰ "Disillusionment with BN grows as inflation goes up in Johor", *TODAY*, February 21, 2018.

²¹ Free Malaysia Today (2018), "Report: Forget the scandals, GE14 will be about bread-and-butter issues," February 13.

²² The Borneo Post (2018), "GE13 Results: Sarawak"; *ibid.* (2018), "GE13 Results: Sabah (P)"; *ibid.* (2018) "GE13 Results: Sabah (State)"; Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia (2018), "Keputusan Terkini Parlimen Sarawak"; *ibid.* (2018) "Keputusan Terkini Parlimen Sabah."

Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya Malaysia, "Keputusan Terkini

Dewan Undangan Negeri Sabah."

²³ Kini TV (2018), "I will work together with my friends to rebuild Malaysia," April 29.

²⁴ See: The Star Online (2018), "GLC chiefs show they can do music in 'Hebat Negaraku' video," March 23.

²⁵ Business Insider (2018), "Tony Fernandes says he owes AirAsia's success as one of the biggest international brands to Najib's government", May 7; Free Malaysia Today's Youtube account (2018), "Kejayaan kami kerana dasar 'dahulukan rakyat' pentadbiran Najib," May 6, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_zQCA74OQs

heal its tarnished image and failed to convince enough citizens to vote in its favor. As such, social media has not only become an arena for drawing more voters and image-building, but also a powerful platform for exposing wrongdoing and mobilization. Increased transparency as made possible by the Internet has made it easier for people to perform background checks and become more involved in civic issues. This sharpened people's objectivity and provided more space for dissents, leading to further distrust in BN's authority.

On the contrary, PH's social media utilization had a profound impact on the youth, influencing scores who, despite being first-time voters in GE14, decided to support the coalition based on previous elections. Therefore, the voter turnout—slightly lower at 82.32% compared to 84.84% in GE13—was dominated by voters aged 21-39 (41%).²⁶ In addition, social media enabled PH overcome its financial disadvantage vis-à-vis BN and mobilize large crowds in their ad hoc campaign rallies across the country. Meanwhile in Kelantan and Terengganu, BN's reluctance to utilize large-scale *ceramahs* further disconnected it from the rural voters. The victory of PAS in both states in the absence of a significant social media presence also adds to the presumption that “personal touch” campaigning, such as *ceramahs*, remains effective and relevant in retaining and attracting voters. Given its 28-year experience as the lead opposition party with the largest membership in Malaysia, PAS managed to navigate through different crowds and address problems that are important to the locals, such as the rising living cost caused by GST, disaster management, and costly student loans (PTPTN).

GE14 results showed that, contrary to the pundits' expectations, changed occurred not due to a Malay tsunami, but due to a Malaysian tsunami. This was particularly evident in the

mass-scale swing of non-Malay support from the component parties of BN—the Chinese-dominant Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Indian-based Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)—to the opposition. Most significantly, MCA president Liow Tiong Lai, Gerakan President Mah Siew Keong, and MIC president S Subramaniam have lost in Bentong, in Teluk Intan, and in Segamat, respectively, to PH candidates. Only MCA deputy president, Wee Kah Siong, barely survived in the Ayer Hitam parliamentary constituency in Johor, winning against DAP's candidate, Liew Chin Tong, with a margin of only 303 votes.²⁷ MCA has lost most seats that the party held after the 2013 elections, Gerakan lost Simpang Renggam and Teluk Intan, while MIC only managed to retain Cameron Highlands, a mixed seat with 34% of Malay, 32% Chinese and 21% of Indian voters won with a margin of 597 votes to PH's DAP candidate. MIC faced the same issues as the Chinese political parties, when it lost its incumbent parliamentary seats of Tapah, Hulu Selangor, and Segamat. In Segamat, Malay voters are slightly lesser than Chinese voters, 44% to 46%, respectively, while the Indian community represents around 10%.

In Johor, aside from the Ayer Hitam seat, component parties in BN have once again been found wanting. MCA and MIC suffered crushing defeats particularly in Johor, as voters abandoned these parties en masse. Their consistent failure to address national issues, such as inflation and corruption, caused more Chinese support to drift towards the opposition²⁸. Poor candidates and misguided election campaigns that centered on small local problems compounded defeat for a party struggling for legitimacy from its core base. The future of MIC, Gerakan, and MCA remains unknown, as the existence of BN as a coalition is hardly seen after the GE14. UMNO itself is experiencing a critical

²⁶ The Straits Times (2018), “Malaysia's Election Commission: Voter turnout at 82.32%, higher than initial 76%,” May 11.

²⁷ Suruhan Pilihanraya Malaysia (2018), “SEMAKAN

KEPUTUSAN PILIHAN RAYA UMUM KE – 14,” May 5.
²⁸ R. Ali (2018), “Commentary: To win over Johor voters, politicians compete to represent the Johor identity,” *Channel News Asia*, May 8.

period of transition and fractioning and it is uncertain that after the Malay dominant political party regrouped, it will be willing to work with MCA, Gerakan and MIC as a multi-racial coalition again, considering the light weight of seats MCA and MIC have in federal. Nevertheless, the components need to first reflect on their mistakes regarding the failure to keep a check and balance within a coalition and standing up against an unequal alliance. Despite the positive outlook for the opposition coming into the election, the extent of BN's defeat is frankly astounding. This indicates that a 'Malay tsunami' may not be as accurate as a 'Malaysian tsunami,' as evidenced by the wholesale abandonment of MCA and MIC. Nevertheless, the presence of Bersatu must be credited with turning key seats such as Muar, and Simpang Renggam to the opposition on the back of Malay support. They presented a viable alternative to many Malay voters which made the switching of allegiances an easier task.

The Implicit Persistence of Racialized Political Agendas

In a move hailed as the end of racialized political agendas, neither BN, PH, nor PAS made race and religion the focus of their manifestos. This trend was captured by numerous polls and surveys ahead of the election which sought to measure the sentiments of the electorate. Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research revealed in December 2017 that, irrespective of race and religion, voters' main considerations for the next election would be inflation (68%), corruption (36%) and job opportunities (19%). The preservation of Malay privilege, while still an issue, remained low in the list of priorities, along with political instability and the weakness of the leadership. The prospect of success for the opposition looks equally grim. The poll revealed that only 21% of the total respondents appeared satisfied with the opposition, and only 13% of the interviewed Malay felt the same. Overall the Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research

highlighted the growing dissatisfaction of Malaysians with the overall political system. Indeed, GE14 results demonstrate the veracity of these predictions. Yet, these do not disqualify the persistent relevance of race and religion in shaping the electorate's preferences. Much like gender dynamics, while race and religion were not openly acknowledged, they emerged as underlying threads in GE14, informing both the fielding and election of candidates.

Uniquely, for the Indian community the MIC was no longer viewed as the representative of the community. In areas with a strong Indian presence such as Batu Kawan, Nibong Tebal, and Padang Serai, the PH won these seats by whooping majorities.²⁹ This trend points out that the Indian community ceased to vote according to ethnic considerations, suggesting that the MIC failed to adequately respond to the community's problems. Instead, Indians chose to vote for Pakatan Harapan, although the coalition did not include an Indian-dominant party. Just like MCA, the MIC's failures to address key federal issues such as corruption and patronism contributed to its perception of an UMNO-subservient outfit.³⁰

Unlike Indians, Malaysian Chinese remained consistent in their historical voting patterns, wherein the party was the key consideration. This is reflected in the GE14 results, as the DAP won its 42 parliamentary seats, out of the total 47 contested, in Chinese-majority constituencies.³¹ In Penang, even as the state government faced severe corruption allegations, such as the trial of Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng over the undersea tunnel and illegal land sales, DAP had won all the 7 parliamentary seats and defended all of the 19 state seats contested. While DAP focused on the cost of living, a key concern for the Chinese community, ethnic-based parties remain important for the Chinese community as can be seen in the strong presence of the party in Melaka and Negeri Sembilan.

²⁹S. Amarthalingam (2018), "Pakatan makes best showing in Penang, winning 37 out of 40 seats," *The Edge Markets*, May 10.

³⁰ K. Haridas (2017), "The numbers tell a story," *The Malaysia Insight*, December 28.

³¹ Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya Malaysia (2018).

Similar to the Chinese community, in the Malay-majority states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Kedah, and Perlis ethnicity and religion remained the key issues informing the electorate's political choice. Ahead of the elections pundits confidently declared the strength of PAS on the decline, especially given the party's split from Pakatan Harapan.³²

The Green Belt in Northern Malaysia

Yet, as predicted by few, the results in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Kedah signal quite the opposite: PAS' political clout expanded considerably from the last election.³³ PAS managed to remain in control of Kelantan, its historical abode, by successfully reclaiming the five state seats lost to Barisan Nasional in GE13 and maintaining its grip of nine parliamentary seats. Its strategy focused on trumpeting its mission as ensuring the survival of the final bastion of Islam in the country. The issue of development came out strongly as a BN's main campaigning strategy in Kelantan. BN banked on the lack of infrastructure and development in Kelantan, Malaysia's poorest state, and promised to build a new stadium, a bridge in the Keterah constituency and a university. Yet, to their surprise, Kelantanese citizens care less about development, a point emphasized by Takiyuddin Hassan during an interview in Kota Bharu.³⁴ PAS responded to BN's campaign by stepping up their religious rhetoric, declaring an electoral *jihad* to defend the state, a strategy which resonated better with the Kelantanese than BN's focus on development. PAS also won Terengganu with a clear majority, 18 seats, and gained two extra parliamentary seats, currently holding six seats. Unlike Kelantan, neither Islam nor religion featured prominently in the manifestos of either UMNO or PAS. In fact, the party's local leadership revamped itself as technocratic, offering a comprehensive, rather

populist manifesto to address the discontent of Terengganu citizens over the rising cost of living and the introduction of the GST. Yet, given that PAS and UMNO remained the sole players in the state, also to the detriment of the Amanah party, an allegedly moderate split of PAS, it is obvious religion and ethnicity remain quintessential in shaping voters' political preferences. PAS also made unprecedented inroads into Kedah and Pahang, securing 15 state seats and 8 state seats respectively. PAS' success is especially relevant if understood in the wider federal context. While the bread-and-butter issue, a grievance crossing ethnic, religious and class divides, was best vocalized by the opposition, a significant number of fence-sitters and disgruntled UMNO supporters in Kedah and Pahang chose PAS over PH. It appeared that, in this three-cornered fight, religion was the key factor, rather than the cost of living.

Conclusion

GE14 has allegedly shaken Southeast Asian politics with an unprecedented democratic tsunami. The results highlighted how Malaysians mobilized across various socio-political and economic categories to hold the BN government accountable for its widespread corrupt behavior and insensible economic policies. The overly optimistic accounts of the election have been tempered by concerns over potential ripples of Mahathir's autocratic legacy, as well as further political patronage. Racialized political agendas also remain a big question mark clouding this electoral triumph, as PH has often been accused for couching racial politics into a rhetoric of multiculturalism. Yet, in spite of all this, GE14 sent a clear message to electorates across the region: whether a vote for PH, against BN or against Najib, where there is a will, there is a way.

³² T.H. Yee (2018), "Malaysia Election: Pollster Merdeka Center expects BN to win poll, but not popular vote," *The Straits Times*, May 8; R. Augustin, "Invoke predicts 5 states to PH, PAS to lose everything," *Free Malaysia Today* (2018), March 10.

³³ M. Nawab M. Osman (2018), "Commentary: As battle for Malay voters heats up don't expect PAS to go quietly into the night," *Channel News Asia*, May 4.

³⁴ Interview with Takiyuddin Hassan, Kota Bharu, May 4, 2018.

Project Report

Project M: Campaigning with a “Dictator”

Sophie Lemière

Birth of a Project

In March 2017, I met Mahathir Mohamad in his office at the Perdana Foundation in Putrajaya. I had interviewed him almost every year since 2012, and since the creation of his new party “Bersatu” in 2016, we have had several informal occasions to talk during fund raising dinners and other similar events. On that day, I wanted to share my idea of a new research project that would involve following him extensively. His assistant had squeezed me into a tight schedule for what I had described as “just a project pitch.”

Mahathir was seated behind his very large desk in a very large office. As I entered the room, he nodded. No handshake or any form of familiarity, as some other politicians would allow themselves after many years of interactions. I learned the man is cold until he is not, but also that the ice may freeze again at any moment.

In a jump-start, I ask, “I would like to follow you during your campaign, if you allow me to.” He smiles, “Well, we don’t know when elections will be. And I’m not a candidate!” I answer in a jovial yet confident tone, “I believe you will be.” In a slow pace emphasizing every single word, he says, “I am just here to contribute, not to be Prime Minister.” I slightly pull my shoulders straight to the back of the chair, perhaps to add a dramatic note and state, “You are not a contributor, Sir, you are a leader.” He smiles again, and as a conclusion to a discussion turned into negotiation, he adds, “I never say no to a reporter”. I managed to quiet the huge “*oh là là*” that crossed my mind.

Slightly offended, to say the least, in my French pride, my female pride, or my academic pride (or all of the above) I was, for a very short moment, unsure of how to position myself. Mahathir has

never been friendly to journalists and I could not start this project on such a perception. I wondered in my mind, “Is he not just playing, again?” I took a breath and started—without really knowing where I would land—“Well, Sir, if you don’t mind, I have studied for 12 years and suffered 7 years doing a PhD so, please, do not call me a reporter. I am a Doctor, like you. I’m Dr. Sophie, you are Dr. Mahathir.” He looked both surprised and amused: “True... you don’t call me ‘Tun’ like others do. Is that (the reason) why?”

A month later, the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University offered me a fantastic fellowship for this project. In July, I went back to Malaysia. I was very proud to announce to Mahathir Harvard University’s interest in the project. I said, “the Americans are interested, you see”—I should confess, as a French person, the very unsubtle objectification of “the Americans” has always been an easy tactic to gain the interest of Malaysian politicians. Answering my effort to reassert my neutrality—despite an American-funded project—he sarcastically says: “You can do whatever you want; I won’t try to influence you. You can even call me a dictator, like others do, I don’t mind.”

At this moment, we reached one of the key ideas of the project. Although far from the ruler portrayed in Sacha Baron Cohen’s movie (*The Dictator*, 2012), Mahathir’s image had long been one of a dictator, if not an authoritarian leader. This is an image he always said he was indifferent to. Ironically, “dictator” is among the expressions he has repeatedly used during his campaign since resigning from UMNO; often he tries to feign indifference by making jokes over the fact that he is the “only dictator who resigned.”

It now seems like Mahathir’s magic has operated. His former heir and arch-enemy, Anwar Ibrahim, recently said on the BBC he is no longer “the Trump of his days.” This incredible change reminds us of Chaplin’s fantastic scene in “the Great Dictator” (1940)

where a Jewish barber takes the place of the anti-Semitic, ethnonationalist dictator of “Tomania” and declares in a passionate speech to his army a new path for the world, a path to universality, equality, and justice. Somewhere between redemption and denial, pragmatism and opportunism, Mahathir is re-writing history: after all, what kind of dictator—if not a barber—becomes a symbol of democracy?

The Last Game: Gambling with Mahathir

“The Last Game: Malaysian Politics in the Eye of Mahathir Campaign” is a research project I conducted during five months in Malaysia, from the General Assembly of his party Bersatu on December 30th, to his first speech to the Prime Minister Office’s staff on May 23rd.

As explained, Mahathir had agreed to the project in 2017, but I had to be renegotiate my access from time to time. This trip was not first encounter with Mahathir, or his circle, but I surely had never before been as close to him. For the past 20 years or more, only a very protective and very tight circle of loyal administrators and assistants surrounded the former Prime Minister. A few times, more than I wished for, I found myself being the collateral damage of inner rivalries. Yet my previous experience pushing at and literally running after gang’s leaders during my PhD days had taught me a few tricks to step into exclusive community of power, and helped me to stay in the good books of most.

The data collected during these five months includes extensive observations, regular discussions with Mahathir and his old guards, interviews with Bersatu leaders and also politicians from other parties, Bersatu regular members and part of the political machinery, UMNO supporters and leaders, gang leaders who switched allegiances from UMNO to PH, and business men labelled as “cronies, former UMNO cyber-troopers...” The amount of information I gathered is tremendous, and I am still just on the edge of figuring out how to explore the many questions I have in mind. I am currently trying to organize thoughts, ideas, and data far from the adrenaline of the campaign—at

this point suggestions from fellow Malaysianists or comparatist ethnographers are very welcome!

In a first stage, I will use part of the material to update my book manuscript, based on a revision of my PhD dissertation on gangs and politics in Malaysia (anticipated submission in August). During the campaign, I met with many gang leaders and members I knew then and new ones, whom all have switched allegiances to Mahathir.

The second phase of my work is the writing of this new manuscript with the support of the Stanford-NUS Lee Kong Chiang Fellowship and Harvard’s Ash Center for Democracy. “The Last Game” is deeply rooted in empirical material as described and revolving around the persona of Mahathir: his relationship to politics in general, to the public, and also to his close collaborators. On another level, this project implies the need to reflect on spending so much time with a leader, and the evolution of my own perception of him brings some interesting aspects. My intention is not to make this (perception) a central object of study, but rather to contribute to questions related to this type of unique experience and as an indication of how the political charms of a leader may operate. Several questions can be addressed and challenged, if not answered, through a thorough analysis of this empirical material to highlight the underpinning structures of the Malaysian political scene.

The project was, like Mahathir’s decision, a gamble. If he had not won the election, his entire legacy would have fallen through the cracks of history—so would have my ambitious project. In fact, not many had bet on the old man’s leap of faith. However, against all odds, UMNO collapsed on the eve of its 72nd anniversary. Mahathir’s overwhelming victory slayed 61 years of an ethnonationalist political monopoly: an historic transition for Malaysia from semi-authoritarian rule to electoral democracy. No book can ever perfectly reflect the spontaneity, contradiction, and even irrationality of historical events that once put in perspective “make sense.” Just another leap of (academic) faith.

Book Review

Planting Empire, Cultivating Subjects: British Malaya, 1768-1941

(Lynn Hollen Lees, Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Craig A. Lockard, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

Historians of Malaysia, of Southeast Asia, and of the British Empire, as well as informed readers in Malaysia, may find this innovative new book by Lynn Hollen Lees of great interest. I had the pleasure of reading and commenting on early drafts of the manuscript. Hence, this is not a review as such, since I am not an unbiased observer, but I would like to highlight for prospective readers some of the book's strengths and insights.

Planting Empire is a fine, well-written, and deeply researched work that explores the transnational movements and colonial policies that shaped British Malaya and its peoples. Lees explores how British governance permitted, even fostered, cross-cultural exchanges and learning between the diverse inhabitants, especially on plantations and in towns in the more economically developing areas (mainly the west coast). But colonial rule also led to racial privilege and rigid ethnic differences.

Based on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including administrative files, court transcripts, periodicals, oral interviews, and material culture, the social history components of her study are very strong. A good use of quotes and chapter introductory vignettes contribute to an engaging read. Throughout, the author sketches ordinary people and their lives on plantations and in towns, as well as the geographical layouts, that really enliven the narrative. She also presents excellent discussions of topics like Chinese and Indian immigration, the development and social structure of towns and plantations, and the role of schools, newspapers, and voluntary associations. She

views culturally hybrid groups (such as Western-educated Chinese) as among the major social/ bicultural brokers in the local colonial order.

In her view, British rule constructed some bridges, albeit narrow and creaky ones, over communal differences. But while it was established and maintained in an authoritarian form on plantations, she argues, it was transformed and weakened in the towns. Empire brought with it both oppression and economic opportunity. The modernist middle class became larger over time, while many working class subjects experienced Malayan life as repression, limited options, and employment with long hours and short wages. But by the 1930s most (although certainly not all) Malaysians had made peace with the hierarchical colonial system and knew how to deal with it. In her conclusion Lees lays out her thoughts on what this case study tells us about the formation, roles, and realities of empire. Colonialism, she argues, was in many ways a collaborative enterprise that benefitted the rulers and also the sizeable group among the ruled who profited from it. There is much here for historians and their students to discuss and debate.

Call for Panelists and Book Chapters

Revisoning 2020 (MSB Group Project)

The Malaysia/Singapore/Brunei Group intends to sponsor a two-part panel at the AAS annual meeting to be held in Boston in March of 2020 called “REVISIONING 2020” and publish an edited volume of the same name. Our objective is to rethink and revisit Mahathir's "Vision 2020" and the Malaysia that has emerged since he coined the slogan (and the uniquely Mahathir-style “vision” of a perfect future it anticipated). It is our hope that the sessions will produce papers that can appear as chapters in an edited volume of the same name.

Vision 2020 was set out in 1991 by Prime Minister Mahathir as a plan that would advance Malaysia to the status of a “fully developed country” by the year 2020. Mahathir proclaimed that “by the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient.” Vision 2020 was intended to provide direction to Malaysia's national development project that had begun with NEP, extended into NDP, and position Malaysia as an Asian and global leader. Mahathir envisioned a transformation of Malaysia's people and its landscape: Vision 2020 would create a “caring” and “selfless” citizenry ready and responsible for the challenges of the nation's future; its futuristic exhortations asked Malaysians to advance as citizens of a global cybersociety, as world-class leaders in technology, education, and science.

But that future and Mahathir's vision of its perfection was still remote in 1991, and Malaysians needed to change and transform themselves in order to reach it. Mahathir set out nine “central strategic challenges” that would be

overcome in thirty years when Malaysia would be (1) a united nation, “Bangsa Malaysia”; (2) a nation “subservient to none”; (3) a mature, “consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy”; (4) a fully moral and ethical society with religious and spiritual values; (5) a liberal and tolerant society in which “Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultural and religious beliefs”; (6) a world-class scientific and progressive society; (7) a fully “caring society” and “caring culture” where the welfare of the people is not dependent on the “state but on the family”; (8) an economically just society with a “fair and equitable distribution of wealth in the nation” where “race was not identified with economic function”; (9) a prosperous society (Mahathir's speech *Wawasan 2020*, *Majlis Perdagangan Malaysia di Kuala Lumpur*, February 28, 1991). Pointing out that it was likely that in the year 2020 neither he nor many of the Malaysians alive in 1991 would “be (t)here to enjoy it,” Vision 2020 strongly reflected the theme of “selflessness”—that Malaysians would always put needs of the nation before their own and strive towards a perfect future for the good of others. The fact that Mahathir is once again Prime Minister as 2020 approaches is just one of the many ironies that can be read into his 1991 plan and his “vision.”

We urge submissions from all disciplines (History, Political Science, Economics, Political Economy, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Development Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Urban Planning, Geography, Education, etc.), from both “old hands” in Malaysia (people who have been “on the ground” in the years since Mahathir's announcement) and people who envision a Malaysia one, two, or more decades on from 2020 . . . in other words, everyone with a keen awareness of Malaysia, its problems, its challenges, and its politics.

The list of possible topics for papers and book chapters is vast, and we encourage Malaysianists to also imagine focusing on topics that reach far beyond what Mahathir himself might have envisioned when he thought about 2020 in

1991—such as Malaysia and the rise of ISIS; Malaysia in the eyes of China; Malaysia and global graft; the return of Mahathir and Anwar; the rise and the role of shariah and its bureaucracy; and many others.

We invite abstracts (max. 300 words) from scholars at any stage of their career. Please send your abstract along with your affiliation details and a short CV. We will be accepting potential panelists and book chapters on a rolling basis starting in August 2018. Feel free to contact us with any ideas or thoughts about this project.

Patricia Sloane-White, MSB Chair
pswhite@udel.edu

Cheong Soon Gan, MSB Deputy Chair
cgan@uwsuper.edu

Call for Book Chapters

Malaysian Politics and People: Volume 3

Established in 2014, *Malaysian Politics and People* is a unique series of studies on Malaysian politics and society edited by Sophie Lemièrè. The first volume, *Misplaced Democracy: Malaysian Politics and People*, was released in 2014 in the aftermath of GE13, and the second volume, *Illusions of Democracy: Malaysian Politics and People Volume II* appeared in 2017 in the lead-up to GE14. The series aims to make an important contribution to the study of Malaysian politics and society and to speak not only to researchers and scholars of Malaysia but also to activists, students, journalists, policy makers, and others interested in understanding their wider dynamics. Each volume brings together academics from around the world as well as the work of Malaysian cartoonist Zunar, who offers his own visual interpretation of each topic explored in the volume.

The series has played a key role in drawing wider attention to Malaysian studies and placing a focus on emerging scholars and new areas of study. The first edition was a success, selling out its first and second prints. The second volume

will shortly be published internationally by Amsterdam University Press.

As Malaysia is entering a period of political change we are now looking ahead to the third volume to begin to analyze what makes up this “new” Malaysia. We are looking for contributions offering original perspectives on contemporary affairs and tracing the evolution of political, social, and economic dynamics. We are particularly interested in research focusing on overlooked areas of Malaysian politics and society, emphasizing inter-disciplinarity, and ethnographic and fieldwork-based research.

We would be glad to receive propositions exploring—but not limited to—the following areas:

- Reform in all of its manifestations: institutional, governance, judicial, education, economic, health, agriculture and land, etc.
- Malaysia and theories of democratic transition
- Malaysia-China relations
- The impact of GE14 on the wider region
- Malaysia’s new political dynamics: beyond race and religion?
- An ethnography of political parties and political campaigning
- Political and social challenges in general, and challenges to Malay culture, Malay institutions Malay language in particular
- Art and Politics
- Elections: Electoral manipulation, historical perspectives on elections and campaigning
- The place of minority groups in Malaysia: Women, Malaysian Indians, Indigenous communities and LGBTQI people
- Environmental/resources issues

Submission Procedure:

Please send the following items to editor Sophie Lemièrè at sophie.lemiere@gmail.com by July 30, 2018:

- an abstract of no more than 400 words
- a short bio of no more than 300 words
- an updated CV with current affiliation and publications.

Final selections will be made by mid to late August 2018. Once accepted the final deadline for paper submissions will be November 30, 2018, with publication of the volume scheduled for Fall 2019.

Papers should be submitted exclusively in the following format:

- No more than 6,000 words
- Avoiding academic jargon yet showing awareness of contemporary and classic academic literature
- Solidly grounded in recent empirical research
- In Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx)
- Using British spelling and punctuation
- In font Times New Roman size 12, without any formatting
- Using Harvard Referencing Style

The editor, Sophie Lemièrre, is a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University where she received the 2017-18 Weatherhead Center for International Affairs (WCFIA) Scholars Program fellowship. She recently obtained the Stanford-NUS Distinguished Lee Kong Chiang Fellowship for 2018-19, and a non-residential fellowship at the Ash Center for Democracy in Harvard. She will be visiting Stanford in the Fall 2018 and NUS in the Spring 2019. In 2013, she started the series “Malaysian Politics and People” published/distributed by Gerakbudaya Malaysia in Southeast Asia, and University of Amsterdam Press and University of Chicago Press in Europe and North America.

Job Opportunities

NUS: Job Opportunities

The Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, is offering various fixed-term positions for outstanding, active

researchers from around the world, to work on an important piece of Asia-related research. Applicants should only apply for ONE of the four types of position (Senior Research Fellow, Research Fellow, Postdoctoral Fellow, Visiting Senior Research Fellow). Closing date is September 3, 2018. Further details: <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/Page/ARI-JobOpportunities2018-19>

Call for Papers

Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

JCSSA is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal published by the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies, Hamburg. Aside from the print edition, JCSAA is also available online as an open access journal. It presents key research and professional analyses on current political, economic, and social affairs in Southeast Asia, with listings in major indexes. It invites submissions for research articles, book reviews and special issue proposals. For further details see www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org

Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

- Key research and professional analyses on current political, economic, and social affairs in Southeast Asia
- International editorial board, double-blind peer-reviewed and high-quality articles, and listings in major indexes
- Three issues annually

Vol. 37, No. 1 (2018) includes

Special Issue “The Bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia: Transdisciplinary Perspectives”
Guest Editors: Dominik M. Müller and Kerstin Steiner


- Dominik M. Müller and Kerstin Steiner
The Bureaucratisation of Islam in Southeast Asia: Transdisciplinary Perspectives
- Kerstin Steiner
Branding Islam: Islam, Law, and Bureaucracies in Southeast Asia
- Afif Pasuni
Negotiating Statist Islam: Fatwa and State Policy in Singapore
- Patricia Sloane-White
Company Rules: Sharia and its Transgressions in the Malay-Muslim Corporate Workplace
- Kevin W. Fogg
Reinforcing Charisma in the Bureaucratisation of Indonesian Islamic Organisations
- Dominik M. Müller
Hybrid Pathways to Orthodoxy in Brunei Darussalam: Bureaucratised Exorcism, Scientisation and the Mainstreaming of Deviant-Declared Practices

Please visit <www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org>.

The Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs is open access; all articles are immediately available online, full-text and free of charge. The journal also exists in classic print format and can be subscribed to.

| | |
|--|--|
| GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien Institute of Asian Studies www.giga-hamburg.de/ias | Rothenbaumchaussee 32 • 20148 Hamburg • Germany Phone: +49 40 428874-0 • Fax: +49 40 4107945 E-mail: ias@giga-hamburg.de |
|--|--|

Ask for your personal sample copy.



GIGA
German Institute of Global and Area Studies

Member Notes

Patricia Hardwick

New Project: “Malay Chronicles, Thai Drama, Javanese Tales: Indonesian Malay Identity, Pasisir Cultural Flows and the Performing Arts in Riau Islands Province”. Senior Scholar Research Fulbright grant (September 2018 – August 2020), Hofstra University, in cooperation with Universitas Indonesia (UI).

Her project will contextualize the role of contemporary cultural flows that continue to shape Indonesian Malay theatrical traditions and expressions of Indonesian Malay Identity in Riau Islands Province. It will also investigate the historical and cultural flows between the Riau Islands, West Java, Central Java, the Northeast Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, and Southern Thailand to explore the exchange of ideas, performers, and performance practices in this region. In an era in which ownership of intangible cultural heritage is often contested in the culturally interconnected world of maritime Southeast Asia, an examination of the historical and contemporary influence of *pasisir* cultural flows on performance forms like Riau *mak yong* will provide new perspectives on the ways in which people and performing arts circulated in the region in the period before colonial rule and the emergence of modern nation-states.

Kerstin Steiner

In late 2017, Kerstin Steiner was awarded La Trobe University Law School’s Research Excellence Award (Mid-Career), the Research Excellence Award (Mid-Career) of La Trobe’s Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce (ASSC) College, and the Research Excellence Award (Mid-Career) by the university’s Deputy Vice Chancellor. In early 2018, she also received a distinguished scholar award by the Philippine International Studies Organization (PHISO) for her research in the field of international relations.

Kerstin Steiner has also commented on the Malaysian 1MDB scandal with, including for BBC Newsday following the arrest of former Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak.

The interview is available

at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w172w1fkx8wcjg8>

Editorial Information

BERITA is the official publication of the Malaysian/Singapore/Brunei (MSB) Studies Group. A part of the Association of Asian Studies, we are a cross-disciplinary network of scholars, students, and observers with research and other professional interests in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei.

Editor:

Dominik M. Müller

*Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology
muellerdo@eth.mpg.de*